Refining the making of places
Movement, Participation and Change in the case of Brixton

Dimitrios Zachos

Supervisors: Ritsa Deltsou, Yannis Hamilakis

In this Thesis I investigate aspects of place-making in Brixton, London. I look at the movement of people and the ways that movement ignites change and participates in the shaping of places. While doing so, I have in mind the socio-political and economic aspects of an area of a global city like London. Having conducted ethnographical research, nuanced with self-reflexivity, I give my interpretation of what is place and the ways place-making happens in neoliberal-global city contexts.

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Writer: Dimitrios Zachos
Supervisors: Ritsa Deltsou, Yannis Hamilakis
Photography: Dimitrios Zachos
Book design: Dimitrios Zachos
Text editing: Ritsa Deltsou

Contact: dimitrios_zachos@gmx.co.uk

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Abstract

In this Thesis I investigate aspects of place-making in Brixton, London. I look at the movement of people and the ways that movement ignites change and participates in the shaping of places. While doing so, I have in mind the socio-political and economic aspects of an area of a global city like London. Having conducted ethnographical research, nuanced with self-reflexivity, I give my interpretation of what is place and the ways place-making happens in neoliberal-global city contexts.

Keywords: Brixton, movement, change, place-making, city-competitiveness, attraction, urbanities, eating & drinking, neoliberalism.

***** All uncaptioned figures are from my personal archive and intend to follow the text narrative.

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Introduction 1

A change of heart

This Thesis started as a project on gentrification, but soon turned into a piece on movement and change. Spending time in Brixton I realised that remaining fixed in well-established concepts and the imaginations accompanying them, would not allow me to reflect what is a complex reality. I thus decided to make my point through more fluid and flexible notions and theories. Guided be movement and its transformative power, I endeavoured in an investigation on the makings of place(s).

What the fuss is all about

This is a piece on movement; movement and change. As we move we change, as we change we move. Doing so, we affect what we come in contact with. We do not move alone. We move with others, whose movement also affects us; slows down, fastens, diverts, alters our journey/route. Lets think of a virus; a virus, years in dormancy in a non-immune/pervasive system which is aware (or not) of its existence, starts waking up. It starts causing changes. Some cells will resist. Some cells will remain inert. Some cells will welcome the effects of the virus, some cells will reject it. But all of them will, in the long- or short-term, become affected. Not all viruses are simply bad or good. Not all viruses affect all systems and cells in the same way. Not all cells become affected at the same time. Not all viruses get ignited where they become manifested. Not all viruses act alone. At a certain point we become part of the virus itself. Most of us have been born within the virus. We were born as carriers. As we move we change. As we change we move. As we move and change the virus moves and changes. Because the virus is us and us are the virus, since there is no cure for what we call society.

Cooking and mixing the ingredients

This is a piece born in movement; movement and change. A side-effect of a series of personal movements; from Volos, Greece to Southampton, England; from social anthropology to social archaeology; from planning and regional development to architecture; from one place to the other; from one discipline to the other; from one context to the other; meeting new people, experiencing new things, creating new memories, moving and changing, changing and moving, in what is a two way process. The trajectories of my movements coincided, became less and more conjoined, with the trajectories of other movements. This thesis is composed by a selection of such friction-activity that managed to find its way from my memory to my hands and paper/keyboard, becoming transformed into sentences, paragraphs, chapters. Not following a linear structure -because my memory is not subjected to principles of linearity- I move back and forth picking from my tree of memory and preparing a dish. The aim of the dish is to draw readers into reading/eating it. To do show I have to make the dice attractive. I have to use popular and exotic ingredients, give my dish an image that

people find appealing (after all 'you start eating with the eyes', as is a popular Greek phrase), lure people with nice smells, and take care of all the accompanying factors: use a fancy plate, put festive music on, lay an elaborate table cloth, get some shiny chairs here and there. The dish is ready for you to sense, eat and digest.

Why, where, how, what

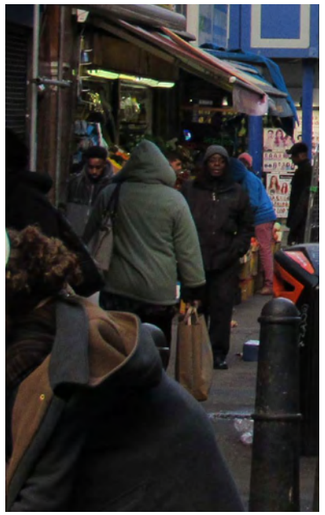
My experience in urban planning made me interested in public spaces. My experience in social anthropology made me interested in urbanities and neoliberal economies. My experience in architecture and archaeology made me interested in place-making and materiality. I chose Brixton, London as the focus of my work/research, as it seemed to be an area vividly reflecting the overlapping/mixture of my interests. What I did then was visit Brixton again and again, spending my whole day experiencing places and people. I spent my time in places where something was happening and places where 'nothing' was happening. I talked with and watched people involved in grassroot local place-making through anti-gentrification campaigns/projects (community leaders, social movement representatives, artists) and local residents (people I shared tables with in local restaurants and bars, people on food stalls, people on the streets and local markets). I studied local masterplans conducted within the last 9 years, seeing what the vision of local planning authorities is for the area of Brixton and how that vision has changed. I tasted the food, drunk the local beer, heard the music. What I did then was ask: what is place? How does place-making happen in contemporary neoliberal contexts in a central multicultural area of the global city of London? What are the elements that someone might consider when analysing such a thing? I chose movement to be my main axis of analysis.

Breaking it down

In the chapters that follow, I start by clarifying my perception of movement and its transformative power. Aspects of the correlation between mobility, people and places are investigated and become rooted through an analysis of the Electric Avenue street market in Brixton. I continue by questioning practices of urban regeneration that subtly (?) act as indicators of who is desired and who is not in the urban neoliberal vision planned for Brixton. I then preoccupy myself with the interplay between historical aspects of Brixton and United Kingdom policies, in order to give an answer on who built and what is Brixton. I conclude by making a point about -making and place-making deploying metaphors and personal experiences connected to cooking, eating and ethnic restaurants.

Literature concerns

Feeling restricted by the fixed notions accompanying most terms today, I abstained from generously using those someone would expect to meet in such a kind of research. I thus avoid terms like gentrification and displacement. What I do instead, is for my project to rely on 'neutral/open to interpretation' terms to which I appoint my own understanding. More to that, my work is influenced by theorists whose writings are preoccupied with the same principles of fluidity, liquidity, uncertainty and instability that I also affiliate. My current mind-set has been 'brainwashed'/formed by Zygmund Bauman and his work on liquid modernity, Stuart Hall and Avtar Brah and their respective works on identities and diaspora, Sallie Westwood and her work on power, and Linda Basch and her work on transnationalism.



Intro

Movement constantly carves societies, communities, people, spaces. Overlapping, conjoined, interacting lines of existence shape interdependencies, mixtures and realities. In this chapter I will define my understanding of movement and the transformative power it entails for people as well as places. From pilgrimages to an immigrant street market what do people carry with them? What induces their movement, how has movement changed and what does that movement mean for the making of places?

1.1 The carvings on the wall

W. W. 1507, Thomas Odell 1578, Thomas Frigges 1629, H. M. 1931: These are just some of the graffiti carved on a fragment of the interior walls of the Winchester Cathedral/Cathedral Church of the Holy Trinity. They come to represent a long history of pilgrims paying their tribute. Lines of existence embodied by pilgrims and characterised by movement spread through time and space. Following differentiated routes and places of worship they all have one thing in common. In some part of their journey they passed from Winchester and carved the proof of their movement alongside or/and on top of similar physical manifestations of other lines of existence. They contributed in that way to an ongoing, accumulative assemblage, linking temporalities, localities, materialities, people, culture and identities, motives and beliefs with movement. During that process the Cathedral becomes malleable. It becomes a locality carved by lines that shape, change, and transform it into a place of always new returns. A collective result attributed to movement and the actions of individuals as their lines of existence come in friction conjoined in the Winchester Cathedral. I am deploying the metaphor of the pilgrim to manifest how the shaping of a locality -a constant process- happens through the movement of individuals having the Cathedral as a common spatial denominator. Wider not strictly spatial contexts like religion and religious practices might have facilitated that movement, but those same contexts alongside economy, society and politics also became shaped by the transformative power of movement itself. Those contexts induce and enclothe the religious act of pilgrimaging, but more importantly it is the act itself and the flows of pilgrims that generated a set of changes and a variety of supporting services and institutions. Services related to eating, accommodation, commerce were affected by the pilgrimage practice and practitioners (see Webb, 2001). The pilgrim's route however, is prescribed. He/she has a destination and he/she feels the security provided by their religious beliefs when embarking on their journey. He/she is certain of his/her purpose, certain of his/her destination. He/she could in that manner be a passenger in Bauman's (2000: 97) train metaphor. A swift however is in place; a transition

–not for all, but for many- from knowing –or at least not questioning- one's place in the world to a state of always becoming. Both moving, both changing, both impacting in the shaping of places. But what mostly differentiates them, is for me, the element of unpredictability; moving on secure tracks and towards an end-goal, and moving freely in the sky having only an idea of what your destination might look like.

Once we used to be passengers on a train. Now we are on board an airplane with no pilot. Bauman (2000: 97, 59) uses these metaphors to signify the transition from 'solid' to 'liquid modernity' in Western societies. The metaphors indicate the crossover for societies and subjectivities from knowledge of 'one's place/role' and the security such knowledge accompanies to uncertainty, intense movement and fluidity. The train comes to represent subjects of modernity that are indeed moving, but whose movement is more or less enclothed with elements capable of providing a relative sense of stability and security: having a permanent/long-term job, not moving across different disciplines and work-places, considering yourself as belonging to a certain place, knowing where you are today and where you will be not only tomorrow but in the years to come. Social life 'on the train' is closely related to and defined by institutions providing subjects and societies with ontological security and setting the contexts of their existence.

The metaphor of the plane comes to carry us beyond modernity and towards different patterns of organisation of social life. It signifies an era usually characterised by the 'post-' prefix: post-industrialism, post-capitalism, post-tradition, post-modernity. The plane, not restricted by the security of tracks, but moving more freely and subjected more intensively in wider risk-entailing phenomena (weather conditions, mechanical problems or even political conflicts as indicated by the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 incident on 17 July 2014) suggests a transformative era characterised by uncertainty. Subjects of this era find themselves in a state of chasing shifting end-goals, never being but always becoming, on a plane without a pilot. Much like the plane they are subjected in broader phenomena beyond their immediate control, rendering their present, future and even past uncertain. *"The condition of post-modernity"*, Giddens (1991: 2) sums up, *"is distinguished by an evaporating of the "grand narrative"- the overarching "story line" by means of which we are placed in history as beings having a definite past and a predictable future".*

Looking back at my own past I can more or less locate only a few years of security and certainty; my undergraduate years as a planner that is. This was my period of stability. Greek crisis came and started shaking my waters during my final undergraduate years. Following the end of my bachelor, I could never know was in in store for me. Until now, that I am writing this thesis, I cannot know where I will be in the next few months and what I will be doing. My life has been a series of unexpectances; I found myself studying a series of different disciplines, doing a series of jobs, staying in Greece, and then England, and then Greece again, and then Germany, and then Greece and so on.
These all are not to imply that uncertainty was not present in the past. What has changed is the ways it is perceived and manifested today. *"Feelings of insecurity"*, Lupton (2013: 3) stresses, *"are common, just as they were in pre-modern times, but we now harbour somewhat different fears, different targets and causes for our anxiety"*. Illnesses, for example, premature death, famines and plagues, as Beck (2009: 4) says, where some of the most common threats of the Middle Ages. Uncertainty and insecurity are always in one way or another present but their accompanying meanings, contexts and igniting reasons change. Giddens (1991: 2), offering a view of what might constitute contemporary reasons for uncertainty, refers to a *"universe of events"* within which we find ourselves. A universe *"we do not fully understand and which seems in large part outside of our control"* (Giddens, 1991: 2). We are experiencing the *"more radicalised and universalised"* consequences of modernity, Giddens (1991: 3) seems to think, but at the same time *"there are no modern solutions to many of today's problems"* Escobar (2004: 209) supports. What is clear, nonetheless, whether we experience a liquid or a post-modernity, is the transformative power entailed within movement and induced by it. As concepts of society are changing, we should move from the *"social as society"* to the *"social as mobility"* Urry (2000: 2) supports and Anna Tsing (2000: 327) in her metaphor of a hillside nourished by a creek, searches for change in the flow of the creek itself:

> *"As the water rushes down, it carves rock and moves gravel; it deposits silt on slow turns; it switches courses and breaks earth dams after a sudden storm. As the creek flows, it makes and remakes its channels."*

Why, however, use the metaphors of mobility and flow now? Has not human sociality as suggested by the case of pilgrims always had these qualities? The ways societies are changing making movement a more suitable plain of research will be the issue of this chapter's next section.

1.2 A sense of belonging in moving societies

Getting out of the Brixton metro station and having a stroll around the centre and its suburbs, I got overwhelmed with African drum sounds, colourful markets selling imported fruit and goods, smells inviting me to local ethnic-restaurants, different skin colours, tiny carpet, cassette, electronics and wig shops that seemed like they were smothering among big company brand-stores. At first glance, all these may not seem as something special. This is London after all; a hive of activities and people from all over. It is the people's attitude however that made an impression on me. People welcoming but also valuing their privacy. A tight community that cares for their own, suspicious of 'outsiders' but only if given a reason to. What is it that makes this area different then? Talking with local Brixtonians and Londoners I got intrigued to start looking for answers in immigration and racial politics.

Brixton has long been a destination for immigrants. Following a series of case studies -in what I am afraid is going to be a bibliography based section- I will focus on human immigration as a way to better understand and relate to the population occupying and shaping Brixton. My aim is to better perceive the transculturation processes/ forces present and their contribution to Brixton's identity, landscape, communities, and vibe, in order to be able and grasp the politics played out.

Reading through the case studies that follow, I came to believe that the social, economy and politics travel with people. What is more, the movement itself ignites/generates sociality, economy and politics. One has just to look at what the local and global effects of the Syrian civil war and the vast refugee flows induced: questioning of the European Union ideals, closing of country borders and construction of refugee hotspots, extreme right-wing parties rising in power, Brexit referendums and marketing opportunities as politicians, actors and religious figures reached to make a photograph with refugees. At the same time, however, we have had outbursts of solidarity and rising of awareness that helped change mentalities. All initiated by the materiality of human movement, itself an outcome of local and supra-local phenomena.

Following a series of case studies while focusing on the interplay of the local and the supra-local, I will demonstrate the existence of internationally dispersed interdependencies shaping subjectivities and identities, affecting economies and political decisions, altering social fields and experiences, rendering societies fluid . Most of my case studies revolve around the experience of immigration.

I will begin my reflection with Gupta's imagined state; the ways through which representations of the Indian state come to be shaped. In doing so, he stresses the role of transnational phenomena as *"although research into the practices of local state officials is necessary, it is not by itself sufficient to comprehend how the state comes to be constructed and represented"* (Gupta, 1995: 376). Characteristically, following the struggles of a local resident named Scripal to gain access to the resources of one of the governmental housing benefit projects running at that time, Gupta (1995: 382) points out the fact that detailed analysis of everyday life is over-determined by transnational influences. Someone cannot possibly understand the adoption, management and implementation of housing programs in India without taking into account the development status present in the post-war international order of the de-colonised nation-states. Conditions, for example, set by the International Monetary Fund, do not directly explain Scripal's case or similar ones. Forcing, however, the Indian government to reduce domestic spending, financial implications get subsequently applied to such programs. In turn, issues that concern which programs should be financed, how they should be applied and at what levels, who the beneficiaries might be, and how long their duration will be, get affected and silently guided.

Nation-states, in the past perceived as the vessel of societies, are now characterized by a proliferation of borders, as the latter become porous and of differentiated pervasiveness. Although their role and influence as institutions and 'imagined states' should not be underestimated or ignored, they have largely lost control over the regulation of their societies, as neoliberalism and new emerging citizenships characterized by differentiated imaginations of what it means to belong, what your obligations and duties are, take over. Sassen (2005) refers to fluid borders, created by the constant interaction between localities and globalities, in a game of friction, intershaping, adoption, assimilation, rejection, resistance and claiming, processes largely transcending state control. The disempowered state is then called to implement international requirements and conventions into its legislation, becoming in that way a mediator with questionable intervention capabilities. The new borders are internal, national and global. *"State-centred border regimes –whether open or closed – remain foundational elements in our geopolity, but they coexist with a variety of other bordering dynamics and capabilities"*, Sassen (2005: 535) denotes. Is this another instance of the government to governance move?

It is an era of transnationalism and deterritorialised nation-states, Basch et al. (1994) utter, bringing the diaspora factor into the discussion, in their book pointy titled *"Nations Unbound"*. We witness *"a new form of nation-state building"* Basch et al. (1994: 3) support, where the (economic) immigrant gets transformed into a transmigrant, who finds himself in a *"state of in-betweeness"* (Basch et al.: 1994: 8). Transmigrants are envisaged as owning multiple identities, forging and sustaining *"multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement"*, crossing *"geographic, cultural, and political borders"*. The dominant division between centre and periphery, home and host country are here perceived as inadequate, and the existence of an intermediate/in-between space is here being proclaimed: the space found among 'borders', the space found in the flows. We cannot find this notion applying more than on the authors' case study of the Haitian diaspora. On the January of 1991 the newly and democratically elected President of Haiti, Father Aristide, greeted members of the Haitian diaspora as members of the '10th Department' (Haiti is only consisted by 9 Departments). By doing so he immediately designated them as *"active participants"* of the new Haitian nation-state and contributors to the efforts made in rebuilding it (Basch et al. 1994: 1). Much like the world around us, identity becomes a subject of constant transformation and negotiation:

> *"Perhaps instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation"* (Hall, 1990: 224).

This state of in-betweeness, transnational interdependencies and shaping of identities is elaborately depicted in Parrenas's (2000) ethnographic work published in her paper *"Migrant Filipina Domestic Workers and the International Division of Reproductive Labor"*. She mainly follows the life-course of Carmen, a middle-class woman from the Philippines that migrated and worked as a housekeeper/ maid in Rome. She found herself in the middle of a three-tier relationship: on the first end is the middle-class woman of the receiving country hiring her, and at the far end the low waged woman at the Philippines appointed with domestic worker responsibilities during Carmen's absence from. *"Globalization has triggered the formation of a singular market economy. As such, production activities in one area can no longer be understood solely from a local perspective"* Parrenas (2000) states. Carmen, an educated woman that used to have a prestigious occupation as project manager in a military base, had to decide whether to stay in the Philippines and continue working as a lowly paid light worker or immigrate to Italy and become a highly paid -for Philippine standards- domestic worker. Given the fact that she could afford the initial high costs of immigration she chose Italy. This enabled her to hire a domestic worker in the Philippines appointed with the duties of taking care of her household and family. Even more, it allowed her to raise her maid's salary from 300 to 1000 pesos and be able to provide her own family with extra income. In the meanwhile, Carmen had to undergo *"the experience of conflicting class mobility"*, *"the pain of family separation"*, *"the experience of displaced mothering" and "displaced caretaking"*, while being part of the international reproduction of gender inequalities (Parrenas, 2000: 574-576). Nothing wraps this up better than Basch et al. and their notion of transmigrancy and deterritorialised nation-states:

> *In their daily activities transmigrants connect nation-states and then live in a world shaped by the interconnections that they themselves have forged."* (Basch et al., 1994: 9).

1.3 The man in Pink

Much like the Winchester Cathedral the street market on Electric Avenue, Brixton, is a place carved and shaped by movement. Electric Avenue has a long history as a commercial road. Its –scapes (occupants/users/humanscape, built environment/landscape, sensory-scape) have changed responding to the intersecting of contexts and the movement those propel and facilitate. Electric Avenue was built in 1880 and was one of the first streets in London to be lightened by electricity. Being a notorious commercial road it rendered Brixton one of the most popular shopping destinations in South London, attracting the 'upper classes' of the British society. Following World War II, Brixton became home to the Windrush Generation, the 492 Afro-Caribbean skilled workers and Britain's servicemen brought to help restore London after war. The humanscape of Electric Avenue started to change and other –scapes started changing with it. The elaborate metal canopies covering the street's pavements, sheltering users and storefronts started wearing down until they finally got removed. Immigrant stalls started appearing selling products deriving from their home-countries and stores started closing and becoming occupied by immigrants. The upper floors of the Victorian houses overlooking the street got abandoned and still are. Pure claret, linen cloths, tailors, tea rooms, drug and meat stores have now been replaced by African, South American, Caribbean, and Asian products varying from Ghana yam vegetables and Brazilian papaya or Caribbean apra fruit to halal meat, mackerel and sea beam fish, while all kinds of other merchandise and shops started getting added to the mixture: bags, clothes, wigs, hairdressers, household objects.

The market is composed by a mixture of sense and memory evoking attributes. Those attributes manage to work together in a way that allows for no boundaries to be set around them. It becomes a place where Passerini's et al. (2007) perception of migration applies: *"a contemporary form of mobility and a dynamic set of relations between places, cultures, people and identifications"*. The market place constitutes a plain for socialising, community forging, continuity of traditions and creation of new ones. For new immigrants it becomes a

place able to ease their transition, as a sense of familiarity and belonging might be induced through the identification with recognisable products and practices. Much like the case of the elder widow relating to others through the material world demonstrated by Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981: 104), *"The meanings of the objects she is surrounded by are signs of her ties to this larger system which she is a part"*. The environment of the street market in that sense, may reflect *"an expanded boundary of self, one that includes a number of past and present relationships"* (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton (1981: 104).

For next generation immigrants the chance is given to come in contact with aspects of what they might perceive to be part of their ancestors' traditions. The market then, gets rendered as a place where attempts of rediscovering one's culture and history become possible . Cultural identity in that case, may however be defined *"in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective 'one true self', hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed 'selves', which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common"* (Hall, 1990: 223), underestimating the ability of the street market to act as a crucible of cultures, leading to what Fernando Ortiz (1995) described as *"transculturation"*. Proximity and interaction, the lack of 'boundaries' -as you cannot constrain smell, sight, sound in an open market-, the co-existence of merchandise coming from various corners of the planet lead to the production of what Rhys-Taylor (2013: 403, 404) through his sensory study of the Ridley Road Market in East London names *"local multiculture"*. Products deriving out of transculturation in that local multiculture environment (in Rhys-Taylor's case a local bakery's bagel), act as emblems open to continual transformations, *"artefacts around which important forms of dialogue and exchange can occur"*. If I had to take a wild guess in the case of Electric Avenue, I would say that it is humans that might fall in the category of such artefacts. Humans like *'the man in pink'* of the picture: a man of colour wearing bright pink tracksuits, singing and dancing to the music coming from one of the nearby stalls. I came across several 'men in pink' in my walks through the wider Brixton market area. They became for me an inextricable part of my imaginations of what shapes Brixton. Discussing with other visitors of Brixton, I discovered that 'the man in pink' exists in their imaginations too. A black man dressed in pink, an immigrant probably or son of an immigrant to London, listening to music, singing and dancing with a carefree attitude, as if he were at home. But he is not at home. He is in the middle of a crowded and busy street market, among people that constantly pass him by. Or is he maybe at home? He seems like a remix song to me. Composed by many different songs. Some come from Africa, some from the Caribbean, some from Europe, some from London, some from the local cassette shop right by the corner. Some songs he wrote himself, some he wrote with others and some he took from others; and still he is a song in progress. Does he feel that this is his place? A place he belongs to, a place he is accepted by others? Does that man embody what this market is all about? Is he the product of transculturation, part of the local multiculture? Between here and there? deterritorialised but also rooted? And finally here for me to see and construct my imagination of Brixton?

Source: *London Borough of Lambeth, 2009, Future Brixton Masterplan*

Figure 1.4.1: *Electric Avenue, Brixton, London*

Source: *Brixton Society, Lambeth archives, http://www.urban75.org/brixton/history/electric7.html & personal archive respectively*

1.4 A conflict of visions

Looking at Figure 1.4.1, containing photos that were shot at the beginning of the 20th century, 1956, 2003 and 2015 we may start to perceive the long-term and persistent commercial activity taking place in Electric Avenue. Though characteristics of the urban environment and the modes that commercial activity takes place, and thus part of the experiences generated, have changed, its imprints scattered through time have attached the avenue with assimilated in collective and personal memories meanings, transforming space into place of internal time. In an urban space that has been at the centre of local communities since its creation, subjective histories of perception get caught in interwoven lines of existence. They construct, renegotiate, re-establish the urban experience and its multiple simultaneous forms. In counterpoint, much like Electric Avenue, the Winchester Cathedral that we started this chapter with, has been subjected to continuous re-shaping as such. A site of pilgrimage linked to and shaped by movement and multi-temporal, overlapping lines of existence and changing concepts on religion. Carvings upon carvings, people choosing their level of obligation and ways of attendance to religion render the Cathedral into a place where differentiated meanings and their material and immaterial manifestations get attached. The experience of being in the Cathedral is thus in some way or another always different.

Transformations as such, are ongoing in Electric Avenue. People carving pavement and street with their movement, getting in and out of stores, working alongside policies and sociocultural situations and altering the market's nature. Commodities change, consumer profiles change, the building environment changes, experience gets altered.

Wondering in what ways the current experience provided by Electric Avenue might change I thought it right to take a look at local planning authorities' designs. Reading through the 2009

'Future Brixton Masterplan' I came across the following section:

> *"The diversity of market trading space creates a unique retail environment and experience which should be capitalised upon. … The arcades and street markets have short trading hours, closing at 4pm, thereby not benefiting from key evening commuter traffic that passes through Brixton (with the majority of users coming from lower-income brackets, translating into low-spend and low-turnover)…. The markets can be considered to have been in decline over the last 10-15 years."* (London Borough of Lambeth, 2009)

Brixton markets, considered to enact a major role in the vibe and identity of Brixton, are of central importance in the future that local governments and interest groups have in mind. They are perceived as part of what makes Brixton unique and render it a site of attraction to those seeking cosmopolitan, multicultural experiences. So what is Electric Avenue according to formal institutions? I started wondering and continued my reading though the 2009 and 2011 masterplan publications. That is what I learned: It is a central street with good quality historic landscape, situated near the underground and bus stations. A street market road, a historic market within a nexus of covered and open street markets. A no-go area during evenings. Part of a conservation area, rendering it a site that needs to be maintained and improved. A key regeneration area, whose economic potentialities are not fully being exploited.

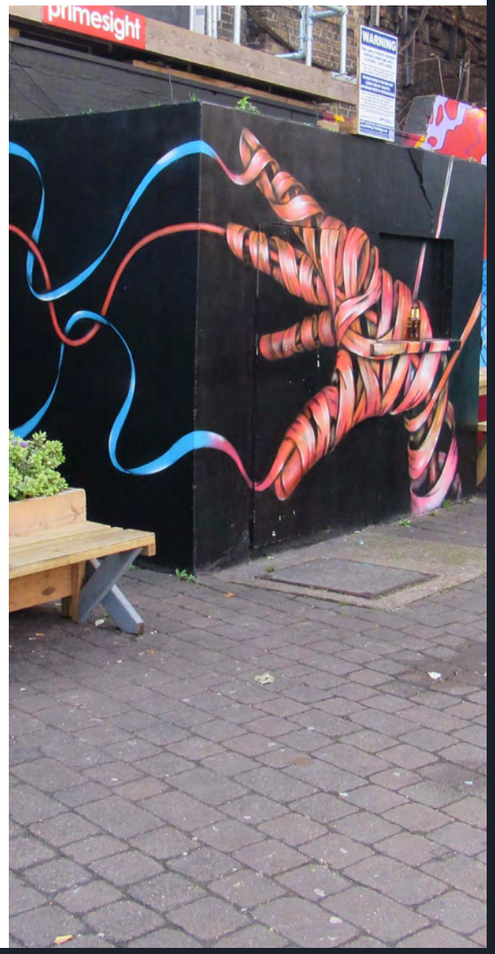
Recent talks on converting the Victorian buildings of Electric Avenue into loft apartments have caused anxiety within the members of the market community. Similar cases to the Ridley market have demonstrated how immigrant street markets changed in response to new residents. New residents get drawn by the area's and the market's multicultural vibe. As the day goes by, however, the accumulative effects of a daily market's residues might cause resentment. The smell of rotten fruit, cartoons and nylon bags all over the place, spoiled merchandise thrown on the street and pavement, is not what respective renters and buyers have in mind when they sign the contract of their renovated, shiny loft. That may lead to the market changing its merchandise and/or humanscape and thus start offering a different experience. Having spent almost a full day in the Electric Avenue market I bared witness to the accumulative 'mess' that follows its function. Subsequently, I cannot help but wonder what would the changes proposed by local planning authorities mean for the 'man in pink'?

Epilogue

Either in the walls of Winchester Cathedral or the stalls and stores of Electric Avenue lines of existence become conjoined. Multicultural, ever-changing, negotiated and mediated –scapes derive out of movement and the intertwining of contexts. The man in pink: an assemblage whose elements are pervasive, where images and senses success, overlap, fuse in an open process of making, in what can ultimately, only be considered as a mixture, and surely not without taking into consideration wider forces and contexts revealed in both the micro- and macro-scale. We have to closely observe the materials, their textility and the ways their elements come or do not come into contact. We have to observe what keeps them in each other's gravity and thus allow as speak of a mixture and not of separate bits. But we also have to look at the forces that attracted the elements contributing to the assemblage in the first place, forming and transforming it, and to do so we need *"to take into account its constitution through a complex set of spatially intersecting representations and practices"*, as forces ascending localities might *"have structuring effects that may determine the contexts in which daily practices are carried out"* (Gupta, 1995).

It is after all the *"neoliberal hijacking of history"* as Michael Herzfeld (2010) calls it, which 'demands' that Electric Avenues becomes changed. *"A vast ensemble of dialectical processes"* that draw value from the grounded, socially embedded human beings (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000: 305) are set in motion, resorting to simplified, filtered notions of heritage, consistent with local government and stakeholder purposes. Space is the canvas where footprints of such transformative processes reveal themselves. Place making, hence, may be imagined as a cultural and political-economic activity, a process of interaction between hegemonies, institutional provisions/rules, policy-making, imaginaries, representations, missed encounters, clashes, misfires, circulations, flows leading to interconnections, re-carving of currents and remapping the possibilities of geography, where *"there can be no territorial distinctions between the 'global' transcending of place and the 'local' making of places"* (Tsing, 2000).

Contemporary subjects thus, more or less, find themselves in-between, in the middle, in the creek -perhaps even up it-, between the banks; they find themselves in the flows reaching for shifting end-goals, never being but always becoming. New global and transnational flows and networks generate new functional requirements with nation-states being rendered as mediators. Social space becomes fluid; a fluid world of mixtures where the man in pink becomes possible. Ingredients might or might not stick together, but nonetheless the processes of acceptance/assimilation or rejection/resistance coming out of this interaction possess a great transformative power themselves. We may imagine the social as unbounded manifestations of flows, interwoven lines of existence, meshworks, constant open-ended dialogues and transformations.



Intro

In this chapter I am defining the concept of participation as perceived within neoliberal economic contexts in multicultural urban areas. I find that attraction, seduction and participation are closely related. Who we desire to attract and who not, becomes then an indicator of who is imagined to be part of neoliberalism's urban visions. In the chapter that follows I will investigate ways that space design hinder or boost certain practices and people. From a shopping mall to the Brixton Windrush square what can materiality tell us about who/what is wanted and who/what is not?

2.1 From the shopping mall to neoliberal urbanism

Every time I walk into a shopping mall the same thing happens. Whether it is the WestQuey in Southampton, the Mall Athens, or La Gavia in Madrid, I find myself lost and disoriented, cutting circles in my effort to reach my end-goal. In the meanwhile, I have a condense experience of commercial eponymous brand-surrounding activity. Now if I was the kind of person that enjoys shopping it would have probably been the place to be: moving from store to store in what is usually a closed, clean, air-conditioned, luminous environment where conventional time concepts (such as night and day) seem not to apply, finding yourself in a fascinating labyrinth where new, unexpected opportunities to consume arise in every few meters. Time passes by and you might get a bit tired, but it is fine as long as you manage to reach the peak of your journey, and find yourself at the mall's top level, a place where you may rest in cafés and restaurants, the only place where you might be able to enjoy a view of the outside. For me though, the experience feels a lot different. Not being accustomed to shopping cultures associated with malls, I find myself moving in closed highway-tunnels, striped of any stimuli not-associated with consumption (political and socio-economic issues, time, weather, frequently even sunlight), with no proper place to rest, trying to navigate in an artificially luminous environment that makes my eyes hurt. A place where the only interaction promoted is between you and the store staff and any sitting areas, if any, are carefully posited looking towards storefronts. You cannot stand unless it is before a store window˙ otherwise you have to keep moving. It is a surveilled space with CCTV and security discretely present. It is strange the lack of diversity in terms of people you may meet inside a shopping mall compared to the outside. Politics of inclusion and exclusion are evident as you feel welcome or unwelcome according to your desire and ability to consume. Using space and the ways you do it thus becomes a matter of consistency with objectives incorporated in design, policies related to aesthetics, existence of stimuli, land uses and surveillance. The implementation of this mixture of policies generates social norms of appropriateness and behaving, determining your level of acceptability˙ your 'right' of occupation and appropriation of space, your sense of belonging.

Attractiveness is a key concept here. A concept characterised by ambiguity. Who should we attract and for what purposes? Neoliberalism intensified an organised 'attraction-need' for cities and urban governments, transforming planning and governance practices, strategies and goals. *"Global developers", "international investors", "more affluent people", "creative classes",* seem to be the focus of interest, affecting resulting urban formations through what Margit Mayer (2013: 9) perceives as characteristics of neoliberal urbanism; *"gentrification-led restructuring of city centers and inner-housing markets"…"investor-driven upgrading of urban environments"..."sanitation of urban space for the purposes of consumerism, tourism and 'work-play' environments for the desired clienteles"*. Geographies characterised by clustering of accumulative wealth through the capitalisation of local histories, identities, cultures get more and more frequently generated in metropolitan centres, gradually changing local values (either cultural or economy-related, such as land property values, living costs, etc.) and instigating movement and its transformative qualities. Participation in such a context becomes difficult to define, as different parties participate in multifaceted ways in what is the making of places. My aim is to observe these processes and their implications for participation in their local and micro-scale manifestations that central public spaces like the Brixton Windrush Square make possible.

2.2 Neutralising space

In 2010 the regeneration of Windrush Square, Brixton's most central open public space, was completed. The square took its name in honour of the Windrush Generation after the wish of Jamaican elders. During the process a series of stakeholders got involved. The project got planned and implemented by FM Conway Ltd infrastructure services company and GROSS. MAX. landscape architects, under the Transport for London (TfL), Lambeth Council, Design for London, London Development Agency and the Mayor of London's 100 Public Spaces Programme imperative (FM Conway Ltd, 2010).

The regeneration included the union of three adjacent public spaces: Tate Gardens, Windrush Square and St. Matthew Peace Garden, plus traffic interventions on Brixton Road junction, Effra Road and St. Matthews Road (see Figures 2.2.1 for before and after).

Not being able to withhold my planner's instincts I could not but start pointing out what I considered as planning and design liabilities/ misfires. Misfires that led to Windrush square being a space of – and in- transition, of passing through rather than occupation and interaction. Intrigued by the phenomenon I started observing and reading about the squares design pronciples. I decided to have a look at discourses expressed by the stakeholders involved. The creation of a public space able to support a vivid non-exclusive public realm that reflects multi-culturality and Brixton's communities is proclaimed. *"The initiative…aims to create a safe, high quality public space which reflects the vibrant multi-cultural community of Brixton"*,

Figure 2.2.1: *Windrush Square before and after the regeneration*

Source: *Okada, 2014 & http://www.landezine.com/index.php/2011/06/brixton-square-london-by-gross-max/windrush-square-brixton-11/*

the announcement of Transport for London (2006) declares. Formal discourses referred to the creation of a public space grounded on local values and needs, which would set this historic site of an already transcending-the-local 'culture-generating' area on the scope of attraction. *"The Square is planned as an innovative public space of local, national and international significance in the heart of Lambeth"*, Lambeth Council (2005) comes to verify. *"This is good news for local residents and businesses and is the result of extensive collaboration with them and other key stakeholders"* (Transport for London, 2006), Councillor Paul McGlone, the Lambeth Cabinet Member for Regeneration stated. A mixture of official discourses grounded on respect to localities and heritage, infused with the ambiguous use of terms such as stakeholders got expressed. The 'need' for Brixton to become part of the global arena, got followed by public participatory planning events, celebrating "Brixton's past, present and future" through the projection of images, *"of iconic Brixtonians such as Charlie Chaplin, Linton Kwesi Johnson, Sharon Osbourne, and Vincent Van Gogh… as well as shots of the streets and buildings of present day and historical Brixton"* (Lambeth Council, 2007) on Windrush square's Bovril building. Discourses and public events at the early stages of the regeneration project implicating a number of local and supra-local interest groups got deployed in order to ease implementation. At the same time, planning priorities got subtly expressed.

My impression when I first visited Brixton and Windrush Square on 18/09/2015 was by all means that of a modern in design perspectives

space: function imposing over form. What someone faces when on the square is mostly a large open space, with hard shiny floorscapes spreading over slightly different levels connected through steps or rampages, and lack of sufficient benching/sitting areas, coverage/protection from weather conditions, green and soft surfaces, public amenities (public faucets and toilet facilities), eye level features, landmarks and solid or soft boundaries generating the feeling of an enclosed, protected, hospitable space. Sitting areas, largely represented by scattered fixed-position chairs, are arranged in ways that do not encourage interaction. Chairs usually come in pairs -although there are also some sole ones- determining the number of people able to sit. More to that, the viewpoints of each chair-cluster are diverted from their nearby ones forcing some sort of optical isolation even when in close proximity, not allowing you to have much eye contact with other sitters. A semi-circular granite surface is the only place able to support the gathering of more than three people. The square's floorscape is mostly consisted of hard surfaces, varying from stone, metal, brick and patches of green depicted in Figure 2.2.2. Their variety might meant to cause a sense of playful plurality, but the lack of accompanying features render them largely unnoticeable, unless on a masterplan or a bird-eye point of view. It was only on my last visit, for example, that I noticed the metal relief flooring, and that was after stumbling upon an online photo depicting it and specifically looking for it . Having visited London, along a series of British cities, multiple times, I came to realise that people welcome the opportunity to hang out in a square or green spaces on a shiny day. Not seeing people do that manifests the inability of Windrush square to act not only as a community space, but also simply as a nice place to be.

Figure 2.2.2: *Windrush Square's floorscape elements*

Source: *personal archive*

Figure 2.2.3: *Effram Rd (St. Matthew Peace Garden on the left-Windrush sqr on the right)*

Source: *personal archive*

Figure 2.2.4: *Urban furniture arrangement in St. Matthew Peace Garden*

Source: *personal archive*

Figure 2.2.5: *Urban furniture removal in St. Matthew Peace Garden*

Source: *personal archive*

What also made an impression on me was the St. Matthews Peace Garden. Considered to be the green part of a unified Windrush square, it remains separated mostly due to the metal fencing surrounding the park and the lack of entrances facing the rest of the square (Figure 2.2.3). More to that, although Effra Rd has been turned into a low traffic road it still undertakes frequent traffic. Such elements do not allow for conceptual unification. According to Okada (2014) it used to be a place where people considered as practitioners of delinquent behaviour (mostly drinking in public) gathered, sat on the benches or grass, interacted, played musical instruments or listened to music through CD players. Remarkably, on the hour I spent observing St. Matthew Peace Garden on 26/12/2015, only a few people chose to cross it, while most chose to use the pavements outside its fencing. The only person that temporarily occupied the space of the garden seemed like he was waiting for someone and chose to stand rather than sit in any of the benches. Searching for material evidence able to indicate reasons for the space's abandonment, I stumbled upon pictures of its prior state. Changes in St. Matthew Peace Garden include: (a) The reposition of benches in order for the person sitting to have an outward rather than inward point of view. Sitters thus face the park's surrounding streets rather than its fountain-core and St Matthew church, as was the benches' original semi-circular arrangement (Figure 2.2.4). (b) A second/inner circle of benches that used to surround the fountain got removed, but the dustbins accompanying every 'ghost-bench' remained (Figure 2.2.5). I do not claim that such interventions are able to solely explain why people do not choose to occupy St. Matthews Peace Garden. What I mean to express is that planning authorities and stakeholders chose to reduce the space's capacity for crowd aggregation.

I stumbled upon a debate regarding the Windrush Square regeneration project on the Urban75 online forum, a Brixton-based non-profit independent site, which comes to support my observations. Opinions of different nuances get expressed but the main debates seem to revolve around the creation of an easily policed space[1], that lacks green space as grass is not deemed versatile enough[2] and lacks of opportunities of engagement either with space or other people[3], while not reflecting the needs and habits of local communities and potential users[4].

It is perhaps due to my experience in planning and design that I get the feeling that it is a space waiting for land-uses to be appointed to. An 'empty' space stripped of engagement opportunities. Despite the fact that buildings facilitating a vivid public realm have their facades on Windrush Square, the latter does not seem able to maintain it. The Ritzy café and cinema, the Tate public library and the Black Cultural Archives, have always been crowded during my visits. Their users nonetheless, only visit their intended/prescribed destination and the benefits of the public realm these places facilitate do not diffuse into the rest of the square. These all come in contrast with the Mayor's 100 Public Spaces programme, under which the regeneration took place, and whose proclaimed aim was *"to reverse the decline in the Capital's public realm, where many public areas have become shabby and even hostile environments"* and *"delivering an urban renaissance in London"* (Transport for London, 2006).

[1] Gramsci, #17, February 19, 2010: *"Seems to me that the design changed as it went on. From what is being built there it now appears to be a flat open space. Not a space designed for people to congregate on. So what is a "Public Square" for. This one has all the hallmarks of what architects call "Defensible Space". It is easy to police and maintain. The whole point of a square is imo is that it provides a space for people to freely come and go and mingle. I may be wrong but I can't see that happening with this space. It will be heavily regulated public space."* (https://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/windrush-square-brixton.243697/)

[2] innit, #234, March 5, 2010: *"This document shows that last year, they were projecting a cost of £4.25m. It also says that the square lacks greenery in order to make the space more versatile for different types of use."* (http://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/windrush-square-brixton.243697/page-8)

[3] tarannau, #19, February 19, 2010: *"I'd have probably put more chairs and seating points together for a start. Little isolated outcrops of chairs don't really encourage people to come together, especially if some 'clumps' of chair consist of 2 wooden seats faced in different directions from one another"* (https://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/windrush-square-brixton.243697/)

[4] tarannau, #217, March 5, 2010: *"How difficult would it have been for the designers to spot that people played dominos on pretty much every warm day out on the square? Just how tricky would it have been to put a few chair facing each other with provision for a table or surface of some kind? There's no reason to defend the designers of this scheme here - the chair placement is affected and not particularly conducive to much activity."* (http://www.urban75.net/forums/threads/windrush-square-brixton.243697/page-8)

Having been at the Windrush square on multiple occasions, I have seen people embracing it whenever some kind of temporary event or land-use took place. One of those was during the 4th Brixton Come Together Festival on the 27th of September 2015. It was a festival celebrating the Brixton community, calling for solidarity , attempting to raise awareness and bring people together over common issues, namely *"social housing not social cleansing"* as was the umbrella-theme of that year's festival. It was a vivid day of music, performances, food, smells, alcohol, colours, singing and dance, giving life to an otherwise sedated public space. Stalls, tents and stages sprung out and people congregated among them enjoying the spectacles, intermingling, moving from stall to stall, discussing, singing, dancing, eating, drinking and lying on patches of grass as seen in Figure 2.2.6.

Figure 2.2.6: *Windrush Square during the Brixton Come Together Festival*

Source: *personal archive*

During the celebrations of the Brixton Come Together Festival, or a Saturday night when food stalls and tables occupied the area around the plane tree, or during the Christmas holidays when a fun park occupied part of the square you got an image of a vivid public realm utilising space.

Much like in a shopping mall, the regeneration of Windrush Square represents for me an attempt of stripping space of its previous meanings, users and practices in a sweeping procedure of homogeneity and sanitisation: an attempt of neutralising space. We may find at this point, Loukaitou-Sideris' and Banerjee's (1998: 291) statement useful: *"owners and developers want their space to be 'apolitical'. They separate users from unnecessary social or political distractions, and put users into the mood consistent with their purposes"*. A surveilled public space that you only visit if you need to access one of the buildings facing it, or one of the events or temporary land uses allowed to take place there (otherwise you usually pass through or briefly rest), gets created. Space gets neutralised under the banners of inclusion (or not-exclusion), safety, modernisation. Attempting to de-attach central spaces of their previous meanings has long been a practice of silent gentrification, aiming to displace unwanted groups and behaviours, like the gathering and interaction of people of colour or drinking in public. Contexts are shaped and maintained that set in motion a game of inclusion-exclusion, according to the sense of belonging-not belonging they evoke, determining your decision to stay, stand, pass through or avoid. Whose participation is desired, in what ways and stages of the planning/ branding process, starts becoming evident in the materiality and planning principles of spaces. The micro-scale of localities becomes then an indicator of broader issues and powers at play.

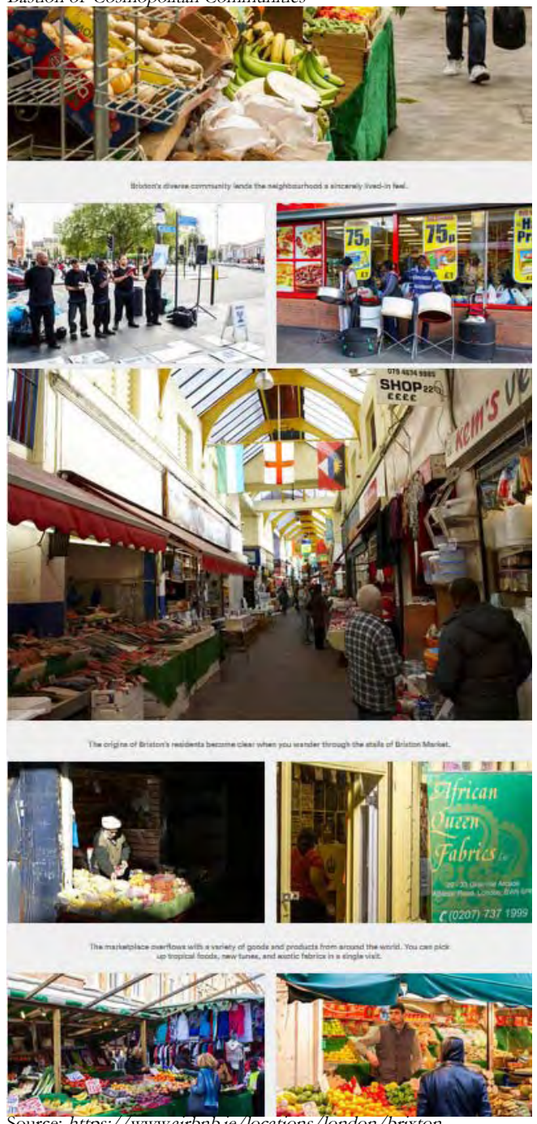
2.3 The vibe

At the same time that politics of neutralisation defining levels and ways of appropriation of public space become evident in Windrush square, diversity attributable to local communities gets propounded by formal authorities and collectivities in Brixton. It is true that forms of racism and ethnocentrism that used to *"set up the binary 'them' and 'us' have been eroded in favour of multi-ethnic accounts of the urban world, which is enjoyed in its diversity rather than feared"* (Westwood, 2002: 104). It is the latest trend in planning, after all, for diversity to be considered crucial in achieving liveability, cultural enrichment and economic growth within a city and surrounding areas. *"The elevation of diversity"*, Fainstein (2005: 3) declares,

> *"as the primary criterion for evaluating urban form, to the neglect of other values, responds to earlier obsessions with orderliness, efficiency, and protection of property values, which are now alleged to have produced dullness and discrimination against "the other."*

That does not mean, however, that we are experiencing the end of racism, but that new more difficult to point out forms of racism have risen, responding to changes in notions of citizenship and politics of equity and belonging. Diversity attributed to Brixton's communities is then propounded as an asset, but concepts of diversity get filtered in terms of acceptability (of race, occupation of space and/or practices) and desired levels of participation. Simplified, selective and uncomplicated notions of diversity get deployed through 'mixing' policies. Rhetorics of cooperation, participation and integration thus largely maintain the asymmetries of power found incorporated/ incubated in the contexts of post-industrial Western societies. The filtering process is hardly conducted through overt/immediate means, but frequently gets indirectly applied through the implementation of planning and design guidelines easing the surveillance of space and favouring some groups, behaviours and activities over others.

Figure 2.3.1: *Photos of Brixton on airbnb under the caption "A Bastion of Cosmopolitan Communities"*



Source: *https://www.airbnb.ie/locations/london/brixton*

Today's notions about Brixton I have come across vary from *"Brixton? What the hell are you going to do there? Do you want to get slaughtered?"* and *"No, you should find a hostel in an area other than Brixton. It's not safe."* to *"Brixton is a great place! I love it!"* and *"I have such experiences from Brixton! Beloved area of London!"*. *"It's got a vibe"*, is an expression I have often heard residents and visitors of Brixton saying, referring to ways of life that are made possible by the area's communities, population, rhythms, lifestyle options. Major touristic companies/websites/communities like airbnb advertise Brixton as a place where you can *"literally rock in Electric Avenue in this dynamic and culturally diverse London favourite"*, (Airbnb, 2016) while choosing key-words like nightlife, artsy, loved by Londoners, and characterisations of cosmopolitanism, alternative energy, vibe and multicultural identity accompanied by visualisations such as the ones in Figure 2.3.1. Formal institutions proceed with proclamations of uniqueness, either of identity, place, cultural, historical, and architectural heritage in need of protection. Such discourses get combined with economic growth statistics, indicators of diversity, language, population change, migration, employment, gross annual household income, transport, deprivation, community safety to mention a few, in order for legitimation over actions and decisions to be achieved. Contrasting facts, of course, arise as the contribution/participation of local, vibrant, immigrant communities in the shaping of Brixton's heritage, scapes, vibe gets recognised, while the need to protect those same things from neglect and deprivation attributed to those same communities is expressed. In the meanwhile, and as refurbishments, regenerations take place and investment gets attracted, and as people move in and out of Brixton, values are changing responding to current trends and demands, while elaborately selecting, capitalising and incorporating aspects of previous ones. *"The council commodifies Brixton's cultural capital"*, a representative of Reclaim Brixton I came across the Brixton Come Together Festival told me.

Brixton seems to be subjected in re-branding processes that re-create it and its people within the tourist gaze. Places and materiality are born in response to such attempts and out of human endeavour. They render space a production that derives out of the intertwining of power and the social. Changes in space, reflect, and are part of, changes in the social, and they are either welcomed, opposed, or not of importance to different people. Low- and middle-income residents and local shop-owners form collectivities and social movements to defend their right to the city. A right that derives out of their participation in what gives Brixton its vibe and value. High-income residents of colour, on the other hand, an informer told me, are *"with the change"* as some of them *"internalise racism"* and *"think that black people are not progressive"*. They subsequently oppose to *"marginalized, excluded, oppressed, people of color"* and *"middle-class urbanites who seek to defend their accustomed quality of life"* (Mayer, 2013: 11). *"…[T]he city is many cities"* Westwood (1997:6) denotes, as positionality impacts on the ways *"subjects understand, negotiate and live in cities"*. It is all these elements having to do with human, material as well as immaterial components and their conjoined lives of existence and the complex ways those come in friction that participate in the making of place. Collaborations and mixtures, upheavals and clashes, acceptance or resistance, willing and unwilling, overt or concealed/unnoticed forms of participation arise through friction and shape place in what is a constant process of carving. Urban space is a contested terrain for power and *"it is the very contestation that generates, shifts and sustains the identities of protagonists"* (Westwood, 2002: 24). Modalities of power, hence, like seduction and resistance, should be present in the discussion of place-making.

The seduction of a city-brand based on an alternative vibe of multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism, appoints participants and consumers with an active role in the seduction taking place rather than just passive recipients. In the game of urban branding and consumption *"Our desires are constantly recycled, reinvented and even invented in relation to new products, the endless pursuit of the new, which fuses the thrill of invention with the status afforded innovations and newness in most of the world", offering people "objects of desire that they believe to be freely chosen"* (Westwood, 2002: 76). Hence, even creative forms of resistance in Brixton, like graffiti, theatre, music and artistic performances, the creation of temporary community spaces celebrating Brixton's history, art, music and people, festivals and mockery parades, might feel as freely chosen forms of protesting and claiming the right of participation, but might at the same time become utilised as seductions of place. It is for example a local community festival, full of concerts and dj sets, artists and performances, jugglers, flags and colours, local microbrewery beer and products, elaborate handcrafted costumes that one might

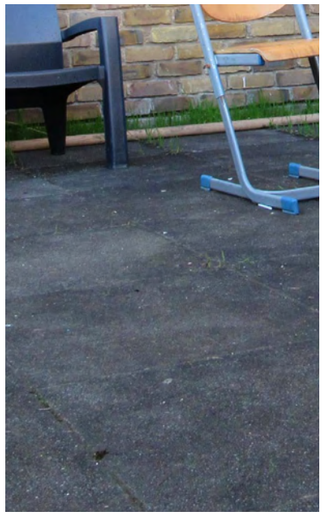
have seen in the Brixton come together festival. Or an alternative community-art-expression space that one might have seen when coming across Brixton Bloc, *"a temporary pop up venue to celebrate Brixton's history, art, music and people before the regeneration project begins"* (http://brixtonbloc.com/info/). Based on the enclosed yard of the former social housing estate 'Thrayle House' raised in mid-1970, Brixton Bloc was a community led space, a *"meanwhile project"*, as it operated until the estate's demolition in order for a new residential compound and tower to be constructed. Jam sessions, street food, cocktails, film screenings, theatre and dancing, diversity festivals in a space infused with graffiti and artwork. I was only able to recognise the graffiti surrounding Brixton Bloc and match them to the anti-gentrification artist known as Boyd only because I happened to see some of them in prior online research (still I needed the verification of people managing the space to make sure).

Community participation as such, either during a designing process or the occupation of space later on, is celebrated/propounded. The levels and ways that this participation takes place, however, gets defined by neoliberal urban-economy related interests. The ways local communities then participate in the makings of a place are multifaceted. They might participate in the branding of a place as means to attract investment and visitors capable of generating economic growth. They might participate in planning processes in order for regeneration projects to have a smoother implementation period. They might also keep participating in the occupation of space through temporary events aiding at the same time the brand-vibe of multiculturalism. Participation thus takes many forms and agents: local and supra-local governments and communities, enterprises and entrepreneurs, planners and designers, all sorts of various stakeholders and their accompanying contexts get implicated in the making of places.

Epilogue

From the shopping mall to the regeneration of Windrush Square who/what is desired and who/what is not become evident in the materiality and management of space. Planning and design choices and their material manifestation in a physical environment are able to speak not only of localised socio-political issues, but also of much wider ones. The material world, one might say, embodies our intentions. *"It would seem that a great deal might be learnt, and many of the abstract theorizations aired… could be operationalized and tested by studying certain aspects of the material world, as they have been physically and spatially produced and expressed"*, King (1997: 149) denotes. Not-exclusion and multiculturalism get translated into the making of a neutralised public space in the case of Windrush Square. A new modern, shiny looking public space got shaped, attractive enough to offer a sense of safety to potential visitors and private interest groups, but not able to attract prior 'marginalised' users and uses. I perceive the physical manifestations of urban planning much like Michael Shanks and Christopher Tilley perceive material culture, *"as produced by and productive of existing relationships, meanings, and contingencies that are contested, open-ended, and socially negotiated"* (Buchli, 2007: 181).

Neoliberal demands for city-competitiveness and economic growth re-construct areas through the tourist's and potential investor's gaze. In the process of shaping the new brand able to boost economic influx, spaces get regenerated reflecting planning, local and supra-local priorities. Although local communities, residents and shop-owners knowingly and unknowingly partake in the shaping of the area's seductiveness, vibe and brand, not all of them are part of Brixton's neoliberal visions. Diversity in terms of humanscapes, built environment and economic base may be seen as structural element of city-competitiveness, capable of attracting human and economic capital. Its participants' value, though, gets filtered, as attractive and seductive features of local cultures get propounded and capitalised upon, while what is considered as a threat or unimportant is left unprotected. Such contradictions *"made migrants of us all"*, as we often live between cultures, histories and the production of localities that find themselves in transit (Westwood, 2002: 101).



Intro

Searching for an answer to the questions 'So what is Brixton?' and 'Who built Brixton?', I unravel the racial, economic and social dimensions of experiencing London and Brixton as a low-income or unemployed resident.

3.1 So what is Brixton?

> *"So what is Brixton? One can argue that a place can be defined on one of the following bases. Some make this concise. They say a place can be described by its physical circumference. By the structures the city need and their specific functions, by linguistic statistics, by its rate of consumption, by the economic state and basically by using numbers. But of course, we understand that is the faces that make it. The …… shapes and flavours, the neighbours you were raised with. Many would describe this as the tight-net community that raised us and gave as the good life we grew to meet. Brixton has been a champion for multi-culture, multi-ethnic, multi-storey blocks, full of stories that are multi-centric. It's so many stories. It is important to remark that one of these stories is yours, but all of these stories are ours. This is our Brixton."*
>
> Potent whisper, Windrush Square, 27.09.2015

It is what we would call an assemblage of stories, personal and collective experiences that Potent Whisper, a local Brixton artist, described as the fundamental, vital and entangled elements that come together to define and shape the identity of a place. The aforementioned abstract is part of the artist's awareness performance given in the final day of the 4th Brixton Come Together Festival. Stories expanding through time and space, involving immigration and movement, multiculturalism, globalisation, conjunction of 'traditions', habits and culinary cultures, deprivation, racism, exclusion, conflicts and riots, neoliberal and gentrifying forces; a constant interplay and mixture between localities and globalities, communities and formal institutions, bringing forth processes of refraction, redeployment, domestication or resistance.

Figure 3.1.1: *The Reclaim Brixton map of heartbroken places and people affected by change*

Source: *personal archive*

"It's our livelihood. This was the first coffee shop here. We've created the atmosphere; we've created this place. One of our customers passed away recently so we had a midnight party in memory of them. People were dancing and playing drums in the street", Aida from Café Brixton declares in the Reclaim Brixton map depicting areas affected by regeneration projects and personalising them by symbolising them with broken hearts followed by people's stories (Figure 3.1.1). There is a repeating pattern emerging from the map's stories: a statement of a heartbroken community, that shaped Brixton and is therefore its integral part.

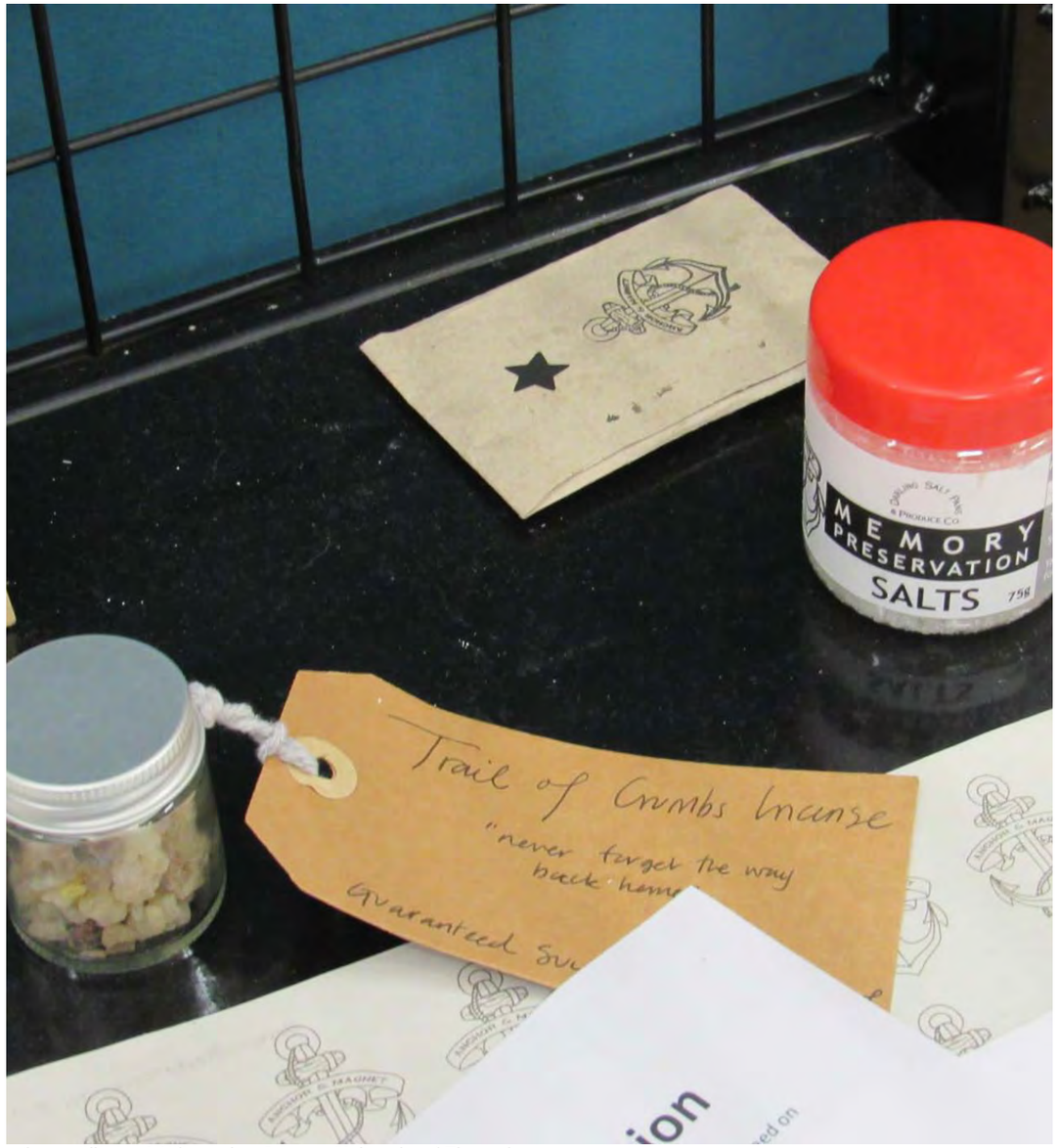
Coming out of the Brixton metro station and turning on his/her right one may come face to face with the Brixton Arches (Figure 3.1.2). A series of brick arches serve multiple purposes functioning as base for the London overground train and sheltering small independent shops trading varying merchandise. From fish and delicatessen to budget carpets, textiles, electronics and cassettes, Atlantic Road and the Brixton Arches compose a vibrant environment like nothing I came across in London. Resembling more to a place where time decided to slow its rhythms down rather than adjust to the hastening rhythms of a contemporary metropolitan city, it comes in contrast to the adjacent image of Brixton Avenue: constant traffic, people getting out of the metro station and rushing to where they need to be, branches of international market firms, stores and coffee shops -two intersecting lines and their flows-.

Walking along the Arches on Atlantic Road one may come across a series of graffiti and banners covering the store fronts as shown in Figure 3.1.3. *"Caution Eviction in Progress"* one of them advises. The hashtag #savebrixtonarches accompanies them. References to the Network Rail and upcoming evictions are also evident. Some of the shops have already gone out of business. I cannot help but wonder: in what ways are the Arches under threat and what does the Network Rail have to do with it? Brixton is one of the South London areas currently finding itself at the epicentre of interest of tourists, ethnic food seekers, local governments, people seeking for affordable but in close proximity to London's centre and thus estate agencies and development firms. Upcoming refurbishments orchestrated by the Network Rail in coordination with the Lambeth Council, led to the fear of an increase in rent prices, signalling an upcoming displacement of the Arches' shops tenants. The graffiti, as I learned later on, were painted on April 2015 in an attempt to raise awareness on the issue and ignite solidarity, support and resistance. But to whom should this resistance be turned to? Who should be on the receiving end of resistance?

"This is making many people upset. Many stores are closing or about to be closed" a woman I shared a table with in a nearby Colombian restaurant told me. It is a process that started long ago but became more evident during the last 3-4 years. She got informed for the first time from the protest banners on the Arches, like the ones shown on Figure 3.1.4, which became something of a stronghold for the anti-gentrification struggles of local social movements. *"Everyone is renovating and raising their rents"*, she adds, while telling me of how the area looks different now. *"It is happening all over London"*, a representative of the Reclaim Brixton social movement told me. The generic extend of the phenomenon renders coordination difficult. Two major council estates in Brixton are under immediate threat, he lets me know: the Guinness Trust estate and the Cressingham Gardens (Figures 3.1.5 & 3.1.6). Housing has long been an issue in the UK and the housing crisis is heightened in places like London. I talked to an employee of one of the major planning agencies in London. What he confessed coincides with what the movement's representative told me: They realised that they have an area that finds itself close to the city centre, has good connectivity and rich cultural capital. *"One*

of the major criteria for new housing developments in pressing situations", as the employee told me, "has to do with distance and time-distance from the workplace". In our case distance from London's financial and business centre. Having visited the Guinness Trust social housing estate I came across rumble, demolition sites, new luxurious apartments already at place and sealed compounds awaiting to be demolished. Evidence of discomfort was to be found all around the estate. "We will continue to work closely with residents to cultivate sustainable communities where people are proud to live", a poster belonging to Loughborough Park, the estate's management agency that is, states. The word LIES got written with a permanent black marker leading to *"Loughborough Park LIES"*.

Having said that, it is time to come back to the aforementioned question: Who should be on the receiving end of the resistance? Is it the borough's Council, appointed with responsibilities of planning/ overseeing central Brixton's regeneration projects? Is it estate management agencies? Is it the Network Rail under whose jurisdiction the management of the Arches falls? Is it the mayor of London and his attempts to 'revive the city's public realm' through endeavours like the 100 public space project? Is it the state policy makers, pushing for economic growth through a boost of city competiveness within the contexts of a global marketplace? Is it then international investors, stakeholders, interest groups, in sort the desired clienteles attracted by the possibilities of the area and thus contributing to what has been called *"gentrification-led restructuring of city centers and inner-housing markets"* and *"investor-driven upgrading of urban environments"* (Mayer, 2013: 9)? One thing is certain nowadays: local problems might have their cause elsewhere, ignited by the interplay of local and non-local agents. It is, however, the involvement of local agents that often designates them at the resistance's receiving point.



3.2 Who built Brixton?

"Who built Brixton? Who gave it its value? Was it a Starbucks?" Potent Whisper asks during his awareness performance at the 4th Brixton Come Together Festival, *"Or was it your granddad and nan too?"*. Maybe some 'Memory Preservation Salts' or some 'Incense Crumbs' so that you *"never forget your way back home"*, found in the Brixton Museum, a mobile artwork-installation by Anchor & Magnet, could be of some use in answering these questions. Replicas and artistic representations of artefacts and their accompanying stories that have been donated by past and present residents of Brixton, offer an interpretation of what it means to belong, giving us a sense of place and home. Whether it is a box of Brazilian toothpicks found on the tables of a local Portuguese café, a shopping trolley used in Brixton's markets or even an actual person offering himself as an object to be exhibited, they are all considered to be part of what shapes Brixton and gives it its value. Wanting to understand who built Brixton I shall now start following that trail of crumbs.

'We are here because you were there!'; Avtar Brah (2000: 276) deploys the political slogan used as an answer to contemporary anti-immigrant discourses in Britain, while talking about the multicultural London area of Southall. The slogan refers *"to the history of British colonialism and imperialism, which resulted in Britain turning to its former colonies for the recruitment of workers to meet the post-Second-World-War labour shortages that befell capitalist economies of western Europe"* (Brah, 2000: 276). Since then Brixton has constituted a hub for mostly Latin American, Portuguese and Polish immigrants and middle/low income people seeking what used until recently to be affordable accommodation.

In the years that followed WWII, as Thatcherism and neoliberalism started taking roots in Britain, civil unrest became evident. Welfare reforms favouring privatisations and cultivating ideologies of individualisation/self-help got accompanied by the implementation of racial and immigration policies and policing targeting specific ethnic minorities. Such neoliberal political endeavours led to increased

youth unemployment and racial marginalisation, while existing class inequalities got widened. The reinforcement of the institutionalisation of neoliberalism was an inevitable result (Fisher, 2006; Kapoor, 2013). Alongside Reagan administration in the USA, the Thatcherite project ensured that business reemerged on national and international levels to a dominant class position, while the reliance on the market for optimal resource allocation accompanied an increasing attack on working-class rights through the undermining of trade unions and the weakening of the welfare state. Conditions required for privatized interests to flourish were secured, while the market power of labour significantly reduced in tandem with increasing levels of unemployment, deprivation and poverty (Kapoor, 2013: 1032). The adoption of legislation introducing new categories of nationality and citizenship, mainly the 1981 Nationality Act, defining what it means and who has the right to be a British citizen, induced exclusionary phenomena intertwining law and racism (Tyler, 2013: 54). Combined with a growing authoritarian state, appointing extended powers to a police enacting with discrimination in what is known as Operation Swamp 81, a stop-and-search operation namely targeted to the Brixton area, a reality of exclusion and deprivation was formed (Tyler, 2013: 55). Especially affected were racialised youths, finding themselves at the receiving end of social, economic and political marginalisation (Kapoor, 2013: 1032). In 1979 England counted approximately one million unemployed citizens (Tyler, 2013: 56). The Clash's 1979 song *"The Guns of Brixton"*, prior to the 1981 Brixton Riots, describes Brixton as a site of police violence and discrimination, where body search and adductions of immigrant populations seem part of the everyday. In an atmosphere characterised by deprivation, discontempt and mistrust towards authorities, the song asks whether Brixton should stay passive and surrender or fight back. *"You'll have to answer to oh, the guns of Brixton"* the refrain repeats again and again forshadowing the upcoming riots:

When the law break in
How you gonna go?
Shot down on the pavement
Or waiting on death row

You can crush us
You can bruise us
But you'll have to answer to
Oh, the guns of Brixton

Under this great upheaval a series of protests and riots were triggered, known as the Brixton Riots. The riots ignited a wider period of civil unrest in England with protesting and other riots happening in major cities within the next three months. Ethnic minorities, mainly black and Asian communities, as well as white youths were part of the revolts, manifesting the pervasiveness, influence and restructuring

effects of neoliberal principles and politics to England's wider society and reinforcing the argument of neoliberalism's quality/side effect of sharpening existing inequalities. Media coverage, however, chose to propound the riots as *"race riots"* (Tyler, 2013: 56). Constructing immigrants of colour as racially different and implementing surveillance and immigration/assimilation policies targeted towards specific groups more than others, only heated up discrimination and rendered British multiculturalism *"part of a minoritising impulse"* (Brah, 1996: 225, 226).

Shortly after, *"The Guns of Brixton"*, Electric Avenue found itself at the centre of the Brixton Riots inspiring Eddy Grant's 1982 song *"Electric Avenue"*, in a year that unemployment reached 3 million and the effects of Thatcherism were deepened:

Who is to blame in one country?
Never can get to the one
Dealin' in multiplication
And they still can't feed everyone

In the years that followed and as Britain passed from the Conservatives to New Labour in 1997 a new era of discourse and legislation on race and confronting racism started being implemented. The term race became muted as we started to transcend in what is proclaimed to be a 'post-racial' age. In reality and as Kapoor (2013: 1043) notices, 'race' was substituted by 'equality'. At the same time race continues to be intertwined in state policies but the term's muzzling made naming, identifying and addressing the new racisms, racial subjects and landscapes of Britain difficult. A series of legislation pieces, mainly the Anti-social Behaviour Order (1997), the Crime and Disorder Act (1998), the Macpherson report (1999), the Terrorism Acts (published every year since 2000), the Preventing Violent Extremism: A Strategy for Delivery (2008), the Prevent strategy (2011), the Community Cohesion policy (2011), accompanied by discourses on the 'War on Terror', introduced Britain to what has been termed as 'racial neoliberalism', silently enforcing discriminations linked to race (Kapoor, 3013). Redclift (2014: 577), following Stuart Hall and his article *"The march of the neoliberals"* published in the Guardian on the 12th of September 2011, refers to the neoliberal revolution as a 'long march' set in motion during the 70's and still progressing. Immigration and race have widely been part of the 'march' causing changes to Britain's racial and ethnic landscape (Redclift, 2014: 577). *"Today"*, Redclift (2014: 577) points out, *"just as it heralds the end of public services, the end of the welfare state and the end of state-led 'social engineering', it proclaims 'the end of race' as well"*.

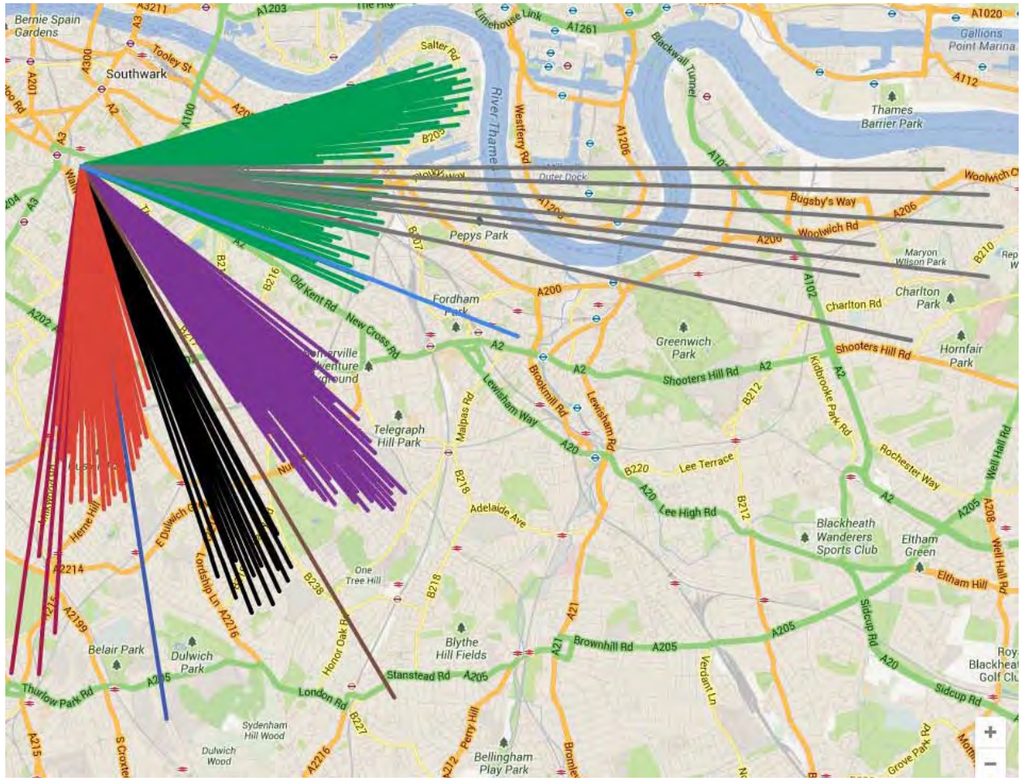
Welfare reforms in Britain have been structured around neoliberal ideologies on privatisation and individuality. Within this context the state stops being the *"direct provider of public and social services"* and gets turned into a mere mediator; *"a commissioner of services"* (Fisher, 2006: 57). Nothing reflects this more than the UK housing and social estate crisis. Governmental objectives and

agencies trusted with the management of social housing estates bowing to neoliberal welfare reform rhetoric and development policies based on privatisation, go through the demolition of existing estates and the raising of mixed public/private housing and luxury apartments in their place. Social estates proclaimed as decaying, declining or sinking and mainly housing low-income, unemployed residents and communities of colour get gradually demolished igniting discourses of displacement and social cleansing (Fisher, 2006: 62). The rebuilding of the mixed estates takes years to complete, many of the displaced will not be able to acquire an apartment in the new estate and fear of breaking up existing communities, networks and families seems solid.

"Brixton is the only place I've been in London where you actually know your neighbours", one of my informers told me. This is something that came up numerous times during my discussions with British and non-British residents of Brixton. "In Brixton they look after their own", an informer that used to live in London and visit the area during the 90's told me, while discussing on safety, criminality and delinquent behaviour. Unlike similar marginalised communities characterised by internal violence "You got the vibe that it was safe for people who live there, but not for outsiders", the informer continues. Seems like Brixton has a 'tradition' of a tie-net community, a sense I also got while conducting a sensory ethnography in the immigrant street market of Electric Avenue.

A representative of the Reclaim Brixton social movement told me that issues in Brixton used to namely be social and class-related. "No English people used to live here. When I told them I was coming to live in Brixton [being himself English] they thought I'm crazy. Now everyone is coming to Brixton… The council commodifies Brixton's cultural capital. It turns estates into cash" forcing families to get relocated to other Lambeth districts, London outskirts or even outside London. The following map on Figure 3.2.1 offers a visualisation of the recorded displacement of the residents of Heygate estate in the Southwark Borough of South London, and the subsequent community fragmentation this process might has caused. According to Council documentation 1034 rental properties have been vacated. Data existing for the 596 long-leash tenants show that 216 of them remained in the same post-code area (SE17), while the rest became dispersed in the areas shown below (WhatDoTheyKnow, 2013).

Figure 3.2.1: *Heygate Estate/Elephant & Castle resident displacement*



Source: *http://heygatewashome.org/displacement.html*

Epilogue

A story of long-term deprivation and struggles gets unfolded. From the rebuilding of Brixton and London by the Windrush Generation and their families after WWII to Thatcher and the institutionalisation of neoliberalism, the Brixton riots, the housing crisis and investment driven urban regeneration, *"repulsion and desire, fear and attraction, attach both to people and to place in complex ways"* (Sibley, 1995). What seems to some as a vivid and crucial to local communities street market of a multi-ethnic nuance in Electric Avenue, to others seems as a declined urban environment feature, that needs to become able to attract more than the middle and low class clientele it currently does. Consistency with demands and purposes deriving out of neoliberalism, city competitiveness, institutional and private investors' interest is crucial to the urban-survival game. Brixton is a site of neoliberal conflict. Communities have been formed and react responding to the fear of fragmentation and losing their way of life. More to that they consider themselves as inextricable part of what shapes Brixton, what defines it and what gives it its value and vibe. Many of them are ancestors of the Windrush Generation that participated in the rebuilding of Brixton itself.

I cannot help but notice that juxtapositions caused by the implementations of urban regeneration projects in Brixton generated and attributed sites and spaces with meanings and qualities transcending the notions of passive material culture. It seems to me that the conflict between local communities, social movements and formal institutions like Lambeth Council and Network Rail re-substantialised sites like the Brixton Arches. They have grown here to become an entity, a site of claim, perceived not just as bricks and welding materials giving form to an architectural style and compound able to house local enterprises, or even as simply build heritage in need of protection. Rather materials, people and their lines of existence find themselves mingled together, becoming a symbol/stronghold of sovereignty over the Brixton area. *"…and if network rail don't listen they won't just evict the traders, they'll be evicting Brixton! So these are the reasons we have to march in. To defend our community by defending our Arches."*, Potent Whisper concludes.

Intro

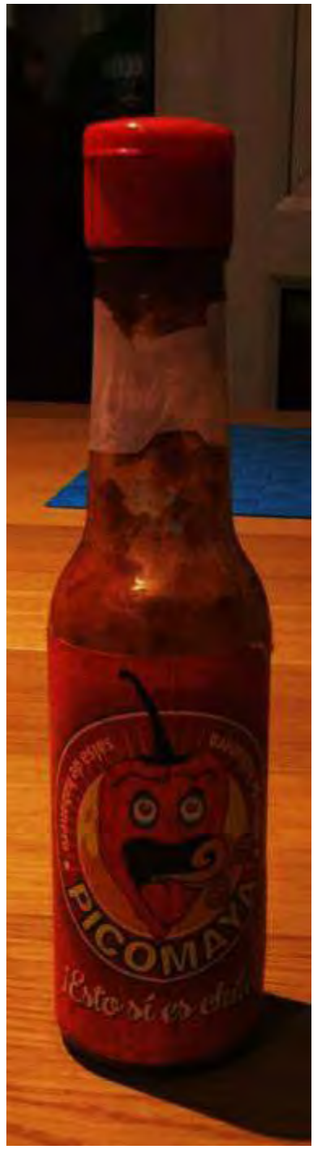
Guided by personal eating experiences in Southampton and Brixton I am concerned, in this chapter, with issues of originality and –making through the sociality entailed in food and mobility. All sorts of -making get ignited by the social acts of eating and drinking; identity-making, economy-making, site-making, place-making. Whether we refer to the composing of a new or an altered recipe, to people rediscovering and performing their cultural and personal identity, or to ethnic restaurants and food stalls popping up due to user or investment driven demand, food is a powerful site of contestation in Brixton.

4.1 Recipes, Identities and Power

"I love it when I see the table cloth out" my housemate told me one evening after coming home from work; *"It means people"*. A small eating, followed by coffee, gathering with friends came to pass earlier that day. The material remnants of that coming together, the table cloth, came to indicate the sharing of space, food, time, thoughts and discourses, experiences, even after the participants were long gone. The acts of eating and drinking, either with and among others, or alone, are social acts. Memories and experiences become generated, encounters take place causing mutual transformations, while symbolic meanings, practices, culturally prescribed sensorialities and tacit knowledge get manifested. There is a term I came across in one of my senses related module that intrigued me to investigate the relation of food and –making: Commensality. More than an act of 'devouring', dining with people is an act of exchange and creation. In this exchange of sensory memories, emotions and substances, *"history, knowledge, feeling and the senses become embedded in the material culture and its components"* (Seremetakis, 1994:37). In this process objects get turned into things, spaces into places, identities into performances and performances into identities.

Whether we realise it or not, food constitutes a 'contested' negotiated site . It talks about movement, economy, politics, the intermingling of localities and globalities, globalisation. It talks about people; people participating in the production and acquisition of cooking ingredients, meal preparation and cooking, eating and drinking. Even more, food might become a site of claiming, as people, food stalls, and ethnic restaurants assert to offer a true Greek, Chinese, Indian or Thai eating experience.

It was my turn to host what I claimed to be a Greek dinner during that day. Foods associated with my place of origin were cooked and offered. Recipes somehow obtained at times I cannot recall, but not by merely reading from a cookbook. A recipe seems to me much like identity; *"a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being"* (Hall, 1990: 225). As individuals we constantly get shaped through our participation in and interaction, friction with various social groups, their moral



systems, ethics, mentalities, practices and behaviours, material and immaterial elements of their existence. As we move from one social group to another, and come in contact/encounter people participating in groups different than ours, we get transformed and re-shaped. But it is not only people that shape us. It is all material and immaterial evidence of human and non-human existence surrounding us. When it comes to a dish, much like any artefact, there are stories entailing a diversity of temporalities to be told. One has just to follow the biography of sugar, to start revealing issues of colonisation, slavery, inequalities and suppression, international relationships and interdependencies, changing food habits and medical conditions. Or we just have to look at pizza. Once part of the standard Neapolitan diet of the lower classes it travelled to the United States alongside migrant waves, where it went through transformations in order *"to meet American tastes"* and ignite *"its international career"* (Möhring, 2008: 113-114). Much like any artefact recovered in archaeological excavations, sugar and pizza also have social lives and many stories to narrate depending on the point of view of the storyteller. Pizza and the recipe for pizza were and still are sites of transculturation, as the term is defined by Ortiz (1995). Despite the pressing attempts of Capitalist intrusions for homogenisation in food production and distribution, individualistic acts of resistance constantly manifest themselves as personal preferences and transculturation processes take over. *"I upgraded the pizza"*, a Mexican friend in Southampton told me during a dinner she hosted. Using a standardised pizza obtained through a transnational supermarket company as a template, she enhanced it with extra ingredients of her preference. Many of them were associated with Mexico or were directly brought to England from Mexico altering and personalising the 'fixed-homogenous' pizza as lines of movement and resistance get carved on it, thus transforming the eating experience itself. Having come across such acts of transculturation and resistance numerous times, I start questioning the success component of *"uniformity"* that, according to Schlosser (2001:5), fast food companies rely on.

Referring to the fast food culture, Schlosser (2001: 5) states:

> *"The key to a successful franchise, according to many texts on the subject, can be expressed in one word: "uniformity." Franchises and chain stores strive to offer exactly the same product or service at numerous locations. Customers are drawn to familiar brands by an instinct to avoid the unknown. A brand offers a feeling of reassurance when its products are always and everywhere the same."*

It is rather fear of the unfamiliar, the not previously experienced and in my opinion the attribute of easiness rather than the issue of homogeneity that draws people to brands. But what happens when the 'unfamiliar' travels alongside people, like in the case of my Mexican friend? She brought what was familiar to her and unfamiliar to me introducing me to that 'new world' through the power of trust; trust upon her preferences. Transculturation then, we might dare say, is always present and so are politics and components of trust, movement, familiarity and unfamiliarity, homogeneity and personalisation. Möhring, (2008: 137) provides us yet with another example of transculturation processes:

> *"In 1953 we find the first allegedly 'Chinese' dish, 'Nasi-Goreng', recommended in Die kluge Hausfrau, followed by 'Schweinefleisch süßsauer (chinesisch)' ('pork sweet and sour (Chinese)'), which consisted of diced ham, ketchup and canned pineapple. By using familiar ingredients and tastes, these 'exotic' dishes became assimilated to the German palate, producing a hybrid dish that is neither purely Chinese nor purely German. Instead, transnational food migration transgresses these clear-cut boundaries."*

Food, much like and alongside Bauman's (2000) 'boundless' contemporary subjects of *"liquid modernity"*, challenges the pervasiveness of porous, transparent, proliferated borders and boundaries, while challenging prominent capitalistic and neoliberal norm and identity shaping systems. Food is always in-between: in-between localities and globalities, popular demands and personal preferences, but most importantly between *"modalities"* and *"sites of power"* as described by Sallie Westwood (2002: 3, 23-25) in her book 'Power and the Social'. Westwood (2002) finds the social in flows, uncertainty and movement. Power, inextricably intertwined for Westwood (2002: 24) with the social, *"is not a frozen attribute contested by two known quantities. Instead, it is the very contestation that generates, shifts and sustains the identities of protagonists. In this sense, power is productive of identities and of the social"*. Resistance and seduction, resistance from my transnational Mexican friend and seduction by the familiar, standardised taste of pizza offered by a transnational company, constitute sites of identity shaping, rendering food in the core of that interplay. As Westwood (2002: 125) denotes *"wherever there is power there is resistance, and these resistances take place in a myriad of disorganised and spontaneous ways on a daily basis."*

It was my turn to host a dinner that day; a dinner attributed with ethnic connotations, but nuanced through the use of ingredients found in the mediating space-shelves of English markets or brought with me from Greece. Ingredients that might have started their trip from somewhere within the United Kingdom, EU or other parts of the world, but nonetheless all contributing and changing the outcome of the 'original' unwritten recipe. On that night I had an assemblage of powers, all shaping my friends', but also my notions of Greekness; the 'power of the expert' of Greek cuisine; the 'power of trust' shaped between me and my friends; the 'power of seduction' luring my northern European friends with the tastes of south-east Mediterranean culinary culture; the 'power of resistance' to the tastes of English cuisine acting with curiosity as motivation for our ethnic dinners. Notions, at the same time, affected by 'immigrant' experiences in England, made possible by European Union's regulations, scholarship and exchange programmes, personal choices, ambitions and affordances, and a worldwide economic crisis inviting me to search for opportunities elsewhere. It is an assemblage of elements working together that makes contemporary mobile transnational societies possible. Transnational identities subsequently get shaped and supralocal interdependencies and ties get carved. Cultural identity is of course affected and as Hall (1990: 225) supports,

> *"[it] belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture and power."*

Similarly food and eating/drinking habits, practices and behaviours as constitutive of identity-making are characterised by malleability and plasticity rather than stability and fixity. Not being secured in an essentialised past, but always maintaining ties with it, they are subject to transformation and constant re-shaping. Even more, transnational cultural identities get shaped as flows of people and their lines of existence transform the things they come in friction with, constantly redefining the collective and individual self. Transnational interdependencies get shaped, made possible by immigration and globalising effects. Contemporary subjects and food, find themselves in the middle, in a state of in-betweeness, in the flows, regressing between places becoming what Bauman (1993: 241) describes using the metaphors of vagabonds and tourists; trying to reach an open-ended destination, spinning and appointing their own web of meaning. In the following section I will approach ethnic restaurants maintained by immigrants and next generation immigrants as sites where such states of sociality, transculturation and in-betweeness get manifested.

4.2 Ethnic restaurants, diaspora and sites of the social

Guided by personal experiences and following contemporary discourses on immigration, globalisation and societies, one issue clearly arises: more than ever before a transition from stable, fixed, bounded and 'bordered' to mobile fluid and porous societies is evident. What I intend to investigate in this chapter is the question 'Can ethnic restaurants become a site were such phenomena might be explored?' or maybe 'Do ethnic restaurants comprise a site were such conceptions of societies as fluid, mobile and in-between may be studied?'.

While doing ethnographic work in Brixton, I came across a little Colombian restaurant in the Brixton Village covered market complex. In need of rest and wishing to suffice my hunger, I chose it as my resting point. I found the smells, the people occupying it, the slow eating rhythms, the relaxed atmosphere and the low prices compared to other restaurants found in Brixton Village, inviting . It seemed to me like a safe haven from the gentrified restaurants and food stations claiming to provide cosmopolitan experiences met in the same space. *"Finally, a sanctuary from the market's colonisation"* I remember thinking and noting on my field notes. I was immediately struck by the choice the staff gave me to share a table for two with other food seekers, rather than wait in the line for an individual table. I became even more surprised by the fact that the woman with whom I shared my meal-time/space spoke no English, but only Spanish. Starting paying attention to the surrounding tables, I saw the waitresses, all of Colombian descent, taking orders in Spanish. Only little interaction in English seemed to take place. I ordered a fried fish dish and temporarily thought that my English needed improvement as the waitress served me with a vegetable soup made with water that fish had been boiled in. As later on the waitress served me with a second dish containing my fried fish, as well as rice, salad, and a fried banana for desert, I realised that the additional food I was provided with (something unfamiliar in English restaurants) must have been part of Colombian eating habits and thus taken for granted in such a restaurant. In the meanwhile my co-eater left, but not before looking kindly at me and greeting me

goodbye in Spanish. Another woman took her place. My new co-eater placed her order in Spanish too, but I could tell she was English so we started talking. I explained to her my research on gentrification and she was more than willing to discuss the Brixton case with me. This was one of the moments that made me realise why David Beriss and David Sutton (2007: 1) in the Starter section of their book "The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat" render restaurants as a hive of interest for anthropologists. As they support:

> *"many of the most interesting aspects of social and cultural life in our contemporary world are featured in restaurants. Restaurants bring together nearly all the characteristics of economic life studied by cultural anthropologists – forms of exchange, modes of production, and the symbolism behind consumption – under one roof"*

During my experience of Colombian eating habits and rituals, the social aspects of commensality and ethnic restaurants manifested themselves. Issues of population movement, either referring to immigration or displacement caused by gentrification processes, became evident. The little Colombian restaurant talks about economic immigration between Latin America and England. All the more so, it talks about the need people have to get a taste of the familiar, in this case through eating, drinking and interacting with the staff, as well as with other co-eaters in their mother language. It is also a place for people like me, also an immigrant for my own reasons, to get once again in touch with recognisable eating rhythms, and people like my second co-eater to practise their Spanish while enjoying/tasting what I imagine to be, through my own experiences in Greek restaurants found in London and Southampton, the outcome of transculturation placed/presented on a plate. It is a site for people to perform, while shaping, their selves and identities. It constitutes a node of intersecting lines of existence. For Latin American immigrants it is a site allowing them to maintain and perpetuate their transnational identities. Regressing back and forth between their home and host country, many times among others too, but not exclusively belonging to one, the ethnic restaurant provides a resting point. Familiar smells, images, tastes, soundscapes working together and forming inviting sensory effects. *"It really smells like Greece!"*; David Sutton (2000: 121) borrowed this phrase that referred to a pot of basil, from a Greek immigrant who recently moved to London, in order to introduce us to the subject of *"tangible everyday experiences" and their power to "evoke the memories on which identities are formed"*. Familiar smells and tastes have for Sutton (2000: 125) the affordance to stimulate for immigrants and members of the diaspora, a temporary return to a less fragmented period of their lives. Basch et al. (1994: 8) use the term of 'transmigrants' to indicate those contemporary post-modern subjects that have ties and *"develop and maintain multiple relationships …. that span borders"*. And they continue on the 'in-betweeness' and fragmentation of diasporic individuals:

> *"Transmigrants use the term "home" for their society of origin, even when they clearly have also made a home in their country of settlement. The migration literature describes the country of settlement as the "host," but such a term, though compact and convenient, carries the often unwarranted connotations that the immigrant is both "welcome" and a "visitor".* (Basch et al., 1994: 8)

Ethnic restaurants managed by immigrants and descendants of immigrants of the same as the restaurant ethnicity, much like the street market on Electric Avenue, get turned into a place with the capacity of perpetuating ties. A place facilitating processes of transculturation where transmigrants among others constantly invent and re-invent their identities. A place where practices, performances, smells, tastes, senses, encounters turn them from 'visitors' into citizens, belonging to the community temporarily gravitated by the restaurant and the ephemeral or repetitive social groups formed within it. Food, and ethnic restaurants in extension, *"may be construed as principally fuel, a symbol, a medium of exchange, or a sensuous object experienced by an embodied self"* implicated in processes of memory, which in turn *"may be private remembrance, public displays of historically validated identity, an intense experience of an epochal historical shift, or reading the present through the imagining of a past that never was*" (Holtzman, 2006: 327), all constitutive of Stuart Hall's (1990) notions of cultural identity.

4.3 As the day passes: what is desired and what is not

As the day passes, however, and the evening economy kicks in Brixton Village, the image of an already contested space changes. Bistro's, fancy restaurants, and cocktail bars open their doors to what I came across while searching online through local news websites: a 'hipster invasion'. Personally, I got the sense of two worlds in conflict. Butcheries, fish markets, groceries, restaurants, and stores addressed mostly to immigrants, alongside minimal and contemporary in design bistros and coffee places, compose a peculiar auditory, visual, and olfactory landscape. It was for me a unique phenomenon of a space that manifested and attracted different and multiple uses and users. From a planner's perspective I came face to face with a successful public space that manages to stay vivid and alive by attracting differentiated groups of users throughout the day. The common axis of this attraction is mostly food.

Brixton Village starts its daily life with what is mostly local residents doing their grocery shopping and having some lunch in ethnic restaurants later on. At a later time the fancy restaurants and cafés open and the different users share the same space. As the evening comes and only posh restaurants remain you find yourself in one of the most popular food places in London. But the space is not so public as I originally thought it to be. A security guard informed me that this is a private space and much like in a shopping mall photography is not allowed on the premises. To which extent, I start wondering, is the multicultural vibe of the market being deployed to make Brixton Village attractive to new enterprise and users? Is their aim to just gradually alter the area's image and reputation? The words of an informer working as a community leader, while managing a food stall in London, ring in my ears:

> *"….all these changes are affecting us because they are not considering us. We are with change. We love change, we like beautiful shops. We want a good shop. But when we applied for the shops we weren't given them. And when I called to rent a bar on Coldharbour Lane…. I called the people who*

were renting it, they said to me 'You have an accent', I said 'Yes I have an accent', and they said to me 'Oh, where you from?', I said 'I am Latin American', they said 'Oh, it's alright we like Latin Americans', and then I said 'What you mean by that?', 'Yeah it's just that we have a client specification, and that client specification is that you don't cater for the blacks'…..so all over Brixton everybody is being instructed that they don't cater for black people…..they are using race again to create classism".

Evening economy industries are largely used as means to make an area 'attractive' and appeal to new investments. It has been seen as a frequent factor of gentrification in terms of displacing previous users and potential users of space. Politics of exclusion get set, indicating what is desirable and what is not. The extent to which the heart of Brixton, the market area and Brixton Village as part of it, is deliberately used towards that end, I cannot tell. What I can tell for sure is that top down change in an urban environment that is guided by pressures for economic growth through 'attraction', acts exclusionary. What the nature of this attraction is and what the outcomes of such politics might be will be of concern to me in the next chapter of this thesis.

Epilogue

Using food and the social acts of eating and drinking, the 'world' of Brixton started to unveil. Brixton's market area with its covered and street markets, stalls, ethnic and fancy restaurants, cafes and bars talk about a society infused with immigration and diaspora, a crucible of identities, changing spaces and politics. Implicated in a world where the social and power cannot exist one without the other, food itself becomes a site of seduction, resistance, trust, fear, knowledge, remembrance. Contemporary subjects find themselves in the middle, as uncertainty, change, and movement prevail in their lives. Food for them may function as a reminder both of where they come from and where they currently reside. It is constitutive of their cultural identities and much like them it is under constant transformation and re-shaping as processes of transculturation take over. Food and the acts of eating and drinking seem to me to be constitutive of the social, as much as the social is constitutive of them, especially in diasporic communities that manifest a close relationship to culinary cultures. Images of fluidity, liquidity, mixing, stirring, movement, mobility and transformation transcending fixed localities, borders and boundaries that prevail most imaginations of contemporary societies, seem to me also as much applicable to food and food places. We should then take notice of what is happening in places like Brixton Village in order to better understand the powers and the changing economic and political demands at play in such an area. We may then get a first taste of something happening. Whether it is a taste we are accustomed to, a taste that we desire or not, remains to be seen. Something seems to be happening at Brixton rendering its residents once again in a state of in-betweeness: between what was and what is going to be. Change, of course, is and always was present. What raises worries is not change in itself, but whether and in what ways people are included in that change or not. A series of questions thus rise: who drives change? What roles are appointed to different agents and what is the nature of that agency? To whom is this change seductive and to whom is it not?

I began this thesis by posing two main intertwined questions: What is place? How does place-making happen in contemporary neoliberal contexts in a central multicultural area of the global city of London? In the chapters of this thesis I moved from the walls and pilgrims of the Winchester Cathedral to the immigrant street market of Electric Avenue, from the 'public' space of the shopping mall to the 'public' space of Windrush square, from a dinner with friends at my house in Southampton to a meal with strangers in a Colombian restaurant in Brixton Village, from an awareness performance in the Brixton Come Together festival to the Brixton Arches, from the mobile installation of the Brixton museum to WWII, Thatcher and the Brixton Riots, from creative forms of resistance to the Brixton Bloc meanwhile project and community space. What I met there was a story of movement, uncertainty, transmigrancy, transculturation and city-competitiveness. I came across a story of changing social realities and localities, in which the man in pink, scattered chairs fixed on hard surface, song lyrics and spoken word, food and recipes were the protagonists.

I will lay curtains with the appearance of one final protagonist, as for me, nothing sums up better the position of which I speak in this thesis, than Elena Penga's (2016) poem "Nightmare Pink" presented below. The poem, an outcome of the implications of economic crisis in Greece first published in 2011, goes as follows:

It's raining. Here. There. Where you're singing. Raining very hard. I'm sitting in the house in a deep swivel chair. It's night-time. I spin the chair around and listen to the rain. You're singing. The rain is loud enough to hear. I listen. To the rain. Another person arrives. With a pink lampshade. Brand new. He switches off the light, unscrews the bulb, takes off the black shade, puts on the pink one, then switches the light back on. We sit bathed in pink light and talk about shades. Lampshades. I open the balcony doors. You're singing. But the rain is louder. It comes into the house. Hits the lampshades. Knocks over the lights. Collides with reality. The cherry trees in the neighbor's garden haven't had fruit for years. Four men enter carrying sticks. They enter the neighbor's garden along with the rain. They've come to discipline the trees and chop them down if they don't blossom. I watch the men hit the trees. I watch the rain hit the men.

The poem talks of a reality where we find ourselves subjected to phenomena on which we maintain none or some control. A reality where many things happen at the same time, movement is present and a cause of change. New elements manifest themselves, enclothe us and alter our reality but memories of what used to be remain. Change might be sudden as the light that shades us and what we used to take for granted might change as a response to new arrivals. A game of power and contestation to prevail unfolds among agents, with the scale constantly shifting changing the dynamics between the 'powerful' and the 'powerless'. Individuals feel like their lives get invaded and their reality

feels unstable, unpredictable and threat-entailing. Our friends, family and house -once considered 'watertight' institutions able to provide us with a sense of security and safety- have become pervasive and fractured; a result of their friction with a wider universe of events of which they are an integral part of. Interdependencies and global risks get recruited to provide 'legitimation' for actions and interferences driven by interests other than the publicly proclaimed ones and contradicting to lived reality. This is for many of us the reality we undergo and this has been the prism through which I gazed upon Brixton. I come thus to express what I have come to perceive as place and place-making from such a point of view of reality.

I should now then state what I consider a place to be; a state of mind, a mentality, experiences and memories connecting us with others, connecting us with materiality and immateriality, moulding our perception and perspective, shaping our sense of belonging. Much like us, or exactly like us, a place is moving, a place is changing. A place is not a static and singular thing. Places exist within the place. A place might not even be bonded to a site of specific coordinates -it might not have a physical manifestation. It may still be rooted to and ignited by one, its memory and the elements one associates with it. It may be personal, or it may be collective. A place is a sense; something that we helped shape, we feel we are a part of and carry with us. A place might be the memories evoked by the sensorialities of a dish. A place might be the stories linked to bricks and moulding material in the local arches. A place might be the personal and collective identities to which a street market acts as a crucible. A place might be a community space embedded with meanings by the ones that helped create it, the ones that visited it, and the conditions that necessitated it.

I got a sense of place the first time I visited Brixton. Walking along the Brixton Arches and while Brixton Avenue's buzzling started fading away giving its way to the music from the tiny cassette shop mixed with the sounds of Electric Avenue's open street market, I started dipping into memory. While the landscape around me changed with transnational homogenised firms/branches giving their way to independent merchants, small shops and market stalls, I felt as if I was making a transition into a familiar unfamiliarity. The urban landscape and its inhabitants were different to what I was used to after spending most of my life in small Greek cities. Images, though, of people selecting and picking their fruit from market stalls, merchants loudly advertising their products, people moving from stall to shop, the sound of the butcher's cleaver, familiar smells, sounds, images, somatesthetic experiences, trading norms and practices, combined with pacing life rhythms and the element of a tangible proximity were more than enough to evoke a sense of place. It felt as if I travelled in time and space and found myself in my hometown on a Wednesday morning, when stalls pop up during the weekly street market.

How does place-making happen in contemporary neoliberal contexts like the ones laid out in Brixton? The next question is looking for an answer. Everyone perceives Brixton differently. I, for example, have a different appreciation of Brixton than someone living there for most of his life, or someone that visits it to shop in local markets, or an investor interested in developing new housing estates. The attachments each one of us has to Brixton are different and as such we relate it to different meanings. What I can say about Brixton, being what it is, is that the making of places that happens there derives at large out of movement and it is movement that defines it. Being part of a global city and mainly a residency to immigrants, it is a transnational place. As such what happens elsewhere affects what happens in Brixton and vice versa. People that live in Brixton and Brixton itself find themselves in between. In the middle of localities and globalities, encounters, common interests and clashes. What happens then in Brixton cannot be explained by just looking closely at what happens locally nor by what happens globally. What one has to do is look closely at what happens in the lines, what happens in the flows, what happens in movement. Those become the facilitators of transculturation processes that derive out of the interplay between people, stakeholders, perspectives, interests and priorities. It is movement and the interplay between shop owners and the Network Rail that re-substantialised the Brixton Arches into a stronghold for local anti-gentrification struggles. It is city-competitiveness and demands for economic growth that led local authorities to a filtering of diversity and their interplay with local social movements that added value to Brixton's multicultural/cosmopolitan vibe. It is the interplay among the stalls of Electric Avenue that led to the man in pink. Much like a recipe, it feels like you pour your materials into the blender, push the button and then see what happens. It is a blender though whose blades are many and of different size. When you press the button they do not all start together. They do not all possess the same power, but this increases and decreases according to the resistance they meet by the materials. They do not have a stable speed and they do not all stop at the same time. The blender goes on and on shuffling the materials, but you decide to 'pause' it and take a look. When on a plate you can distinct bits here and there kept together by a liquid socio-spatial element. It is of course, movement that brought the materials to your hands and then to the blender at the first place, but most importantly it is the movement of the blades and the encounter those had with the materials -an encounter able to affect materials that did not directly come in contact with the blades- that made us consider the materials as part of a bigger whole. Brixton then, I will agree with Potent Wishper, is its stories. Stories of mobility, affect, attraction and seduction, fear and repulsion, resistance and conflict, stimulated and ruffled by movement leading to change. A kind of change that top-down authorities proclaim as inclusive, but reality renders as 'filtered participation'.

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